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The reign of King Henry II of England, 1170-74: Three minor revisions

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The reign of King Henry II of England, 1170-74: Three minor revisions

by

John Donald Hosler

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

John Donald Hosler

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

*The liberal arts
had not disappeared,
but the honours
which ought to attend them
were withheld.*

Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Cambriæ* (c.1187)

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview: the Reign of Henry II of England

Duke Henry of Anjou (1133-89), the son of the Empress Matilda and the grandson of the late King Henry I of England (1100-1135), ascended to the English throne in 1154. In that year King Stephen (1135-54) had died, and according to the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, Henry was received as the new king of the English with great honor and ceremony.¹ Crowned as King Henry II, Henry of Anjou's sons would rule England until 1216, his grandchildren for many years more. Henry II was a strong king, as the saying goes, but his reign is usually characterized instead by his bitter disputes with his liege lord King Louis VII of France (1120-80), his frequent conflicts with the English Church and Roman papacy, and the constant rebellions of his sons. Unlike his French lord, he never led a crusade, though at one point he was commanded to do so. During his kingship England grew stronger and more independent, as Henry would work tirelessly to expand his territory militarily both in the Isles and on the continent. By Henry's death in 1189, however, his grip on his possessions had loosened amidst continuing conflict with his sons Richard and John, and he died an exhausted middle-aged man of 56 years.²

In the twelfth century, the king of England was a powerful lord in Western Europe, but Henry II, like his predecessors before, was not the prime force in the region. His major contemporaries were the Capetian king Louis VII of France and the Hohenstaufen Emperor

¹ Michael Swanton, trans, *The Anglo-Saxon Chronicles* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), 268.

² King Richard I ruled England from 1189-99, and his brother King John from 1199-1216.

Frederick Barbarossa of Germany (1123-90). Moreover, Henry II was subject to the French king. Henry's great grandfather and the first Norman king of England William the Conqueror (1066-87) was the vassal to the Capetian king Philip I (1060-1108).³ In the feudal vein, therefore, the kings of England continued to be the vassals of French kings up until the fifteenth century.⁴ Henry II's liege lord was Louis VII, and Henry treated him with a measure of respect; early in his reign he avoided a siege of Toulouse in 1159 because Louis had taken charge of the castle's defenses.⁵ And while Henry never had to deal directly with Frederick I of Germany, he frequently dealt with the Roman Church, which, ever since the Investiture Controversy's origination in 1075 under Pope Gregory VII, had exerted considerable control over Europe's secular lords.⁶ Both Henry and his sons were subject to the popes of their day; the most memorable clashes came first between Henry II and Alexander III, and second in his son King John's conflict with and resulting vassalage to Innocent III.

This study endeavors to examine some of the more important events during the middle reign of Henry II, defined herein as the period running from 1170 to 1174. His conflict with both the papacy and his own male heirs found their root in the period in

³ This relationship is attested to by Philip's recognition of Robert, William I's oldest son, as the heir to the English throne before 1066. Though Philip was a minor at the time and under the advisement of Baldwin V, count of Flanders, his consent demonstrated the lord/vassal relationship; see David C. Douglas, *William the Conqueror* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1964), 188.

⁴ See S.F.C. Milsom, *The Legal Framework of English Feudalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1976); Thomas K. Keefe, *Feudal Assessments and the Political Community Under Henry II and his Sons* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1983); and John Hudson, *Land, Law, and Lordship in Anglo-Norman England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

⁵ "Henry balked at mounting a direct attack on his overlord, for, besides being a bad example to his own followers, it would, if successful, have left him with the awkward problem of having his king as his prisoner"; W.L. Warren, *Henry II* (London: Eyre Methuen Ltd., 1973), 87.

⁶ See I.S. Robinson, *The Papacy, 1073-1198* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990); Z.N. Brooke, *The English Church and the Papacy: From Conquest to the Reign of King John* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1952); and Uta-Renate Blumenthal, *The Investiture Controversy: Church and Monarchy from the Ninth to the Twelfth Century* (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania Press, 1988).

question while he struggled to preserve his power and dignity in the face of internal and external threats. The five-year period encapsulated both the triumphs and the setbacks of Henry's reign within a short timeframe. Henry II's troubles began with the coronation of his son Henry "the Younger" (1155-83) in June 1170. Three major events occurred thereafter as direct repercussions of the young king's crowning: the murder of Thomas Becket, archbishop of Canterbury, in 1170; a long struggle between Henry II and the papacy concerning the role the king played in Becket's murder from 1171-72; and the military rebellions of Henry's overlord, family, and subordinates from 1173-74. Only when the rebellions of 1173-74 were put down was Henry able to return to the task of ruling his kingdom in relative peace. This study will investigate, and in some small measure revise, traditional historical perspectives on these three events through a geographical methodology in which the physical positions of peoples and structures are carefully examined through extant historical evidence.

Henry's Conflict with Thomas Becket

Henry's relationship with Becket began one year after the king's coronation. In 1155, Henry, bishop of Winchester, recommended the archdeacon of Canterbury Thomas Becket for the post of royal chancellor. Henry acquiesced, and Becket won much praise for his efforts in the office to which William fitzStephen attributed "so exalted a dignity that he is accounted next after the king in the realm."⁷ Henry and Becket grew to become close friends, and his chancellor's loyalty emboldened the king to seek some advantage from their

⁷ David C. Douglas and George W. Greenaway, ed., *English Historical Documents: 1042-1189*, Vol. II (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 705.

relationship.⁸ When Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, died on 18 April 1161, Henry sought to fill the vacant seat with Becket, an ally who could assist Henry in his constant conflicts with the English church. Amidst the popular assent of other English bishops and the near-incessant demands of Henry of Winchester that the scholar Becket be allowed to serve God as he had so ably served the crown, Becket was quickly elected and assumed the archbishopric in 1162.⁹

Henry's gambit failed, however, as Becket underwent a spiritual conversion and soon endeavored to fight not for the rights of the court, but for the Church.¹⁰ At the council of Woodstock in July 1163, Becket refused to pay the Exchequer the revenue of two shillings per hide, instead asking that the monies represent payment in exchange for the protection of the Church by the king's sheriffs. Henry's well-documented rage began to boil against the indignations of Becket.

More troubles were soon to come; a scandal developed when Philip de Brois, a canon of Bedford, was accused of murdering a knight. He was tried, as tradition called for, in an ecclesiastical court and was absolved by Robert, bishop of Lincoln. After an attempt to retry Philip in a secular court failed, Henry became convinced that he had been spared because he was a clerk. Other similar cases were brought up as well. At the council of Westminster in October 1163, therefore, Henry demanded that clerks accused of great crimes be tried before

⁸ For Becket's tenure as chancellor, see Lewis B. Radford, *Thomas of London, Before his Consecration* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1894).

⁹ Becket's transmission to both chancellor and archbishop are detailed by William FitzStephen and Roger of Pontigny; see *EHD*, 702-7 and 709-12, respectively. The only dissenting voice amongst the bishops was Gilbert Foliot, then bishop of Hereford, and after 1163, bishop of London.

¹⁰ For the most recent study of this, see Michael Staunton, "Thomas Becket's Conversion," *Anglo-Norman Studies: Proceedings of the Battle Conference*, Vol. 21 (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), 193-211.

the court's secular Justices in Eyre. The bishops present, including Becket, would not agree and Henry stormed away in anger.¹¹

Under the pressure of Alexander III and his cardinals, however, Becket soon relented and accepted the new legal mandate of the king. The conditions for secular trials, the appeals of ecclesiastics, and other matters were spelled out in the Constitutions of Clarendon, a document that Becket agreed to in 1164.¹² Unfortunately, the response from the monks at Canterbury and other English bishops was less than receptive. Becket became aghast at his transgression and changed his mind at the council of Northampton that same month.¹³ With the English bishops behind him, Becket rescinded his full agreement to the Constitutions. In response, Henry assailed Becket with charges of financial impropriety from his days as chancellor. The king then asked his sheriffs and barons to pronounce judgment on Becket, and in response the archbishop fled England to exile in France.¹⁴ Becket would live in exile for six years, from November 1164 to November 1170.

After a long period of continued conflict between Henry and Becket, manifesting primarily in letters sent back and forth between the two men and Pope Alexander III, signs of peace appeared in 1169. Becket threatened to place the whole of England under interdict, and Alexander III condemned the Clarendon articles and declared the sentences on Becket's head null and void.¹⁵ Henry reacted by conceding the ecclesiastical trial rights hindered by

¹¹ Edward Grim's account of the council of Woodstock and Herbert of Bosham's account of the council of Westminster can be found in *EHD*, 713-5 and 715-6, respectively.

¹² For the full text of the Constitutions, see Ernest F. Henderson, *Select Historical Documents of the Middle Ages* (Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1968), 11-16 or *EHD*, 718-22; in Latin, see William Stubbs, ed., *Select Charters* (1913), 163.

¹³ Staunton, 210.

¹⁴ From FitzStephen's account; see *EHD*, 732-3.

¹⁵ David Knowles, *The Episcopal Colleagues of Archbishop Thomas Becket* (Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1970), 116. Becket may have received a papal bull releasing him from the obligations of his consent to the

the Constitutions of Clarendon, absolving Becket of the financial charges against him, and restoring to Canterbury Cathedral its rightful lands. A peace attempt at Montmartre in November proved abortive, but the two men eventually agreed to terms at Fréteval on 22 July 1170. Becket would return to his cathedral in November of that year.

In the preceding June, however, a certain event had occurred that would spell the future doom of Becket and a series of headaches for Henry. Henry's oldest son Henry the Younger was crowned king at London by Roger, archbishop of York, aided in the act by Hugh, bishop of Durham, Walter, bishop of Rochester, Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London, and Jocelin, bishop of Salisbury.¹⁶ The act violated the primacy of the see of Canterbury in such matters.¹⁷ The English bishops were fully aware of this, and some refused to participate; Roger, bishop of Worcester, for example, stayed in France and risked the king's ire for his refusal to attend.¹⁸ In the face of this usurpation of Canterbury's rights, Becket excommunicated all the bishops involved with the coronation. The bishops, now presiding over their sees under anathema, sought out Henry II in Normandy and pleaded their case to him. Edward Grim recalled the now-famous words of the angry king, uttered on Christmas Day, 1170: "I have nourished and promoted in my realm idle and wretched knaves, faithless to their lord, whom they suffer to be mocked thus shamefully by a low-born clerk."¹⁹ Four knights departed Henry's court in response and, bent on murderous deeds, began a hasty

Constitutions; see William Dugdale, *Monasticon Anglicanum*, ed. John Caley, Henry Ellis, and Bulkeley Bandinel, Vol. I (London: James Bohn, 1846), 34.

¹⁶ Hugh Capet had crowned his own son in 987 to ensure the hereditary succession of the western Frankish throne, and by the late twelfth century it was not unusual for kings to crown their heirs while they were still alive.

¹⁷ Canterbury's primacy was strongly championed by its archbishop Saint Anselm and was confirmed in 1103 by Pope Pascal II; see C. Warren Hollister, *Henry I* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2001), 168.

¹⁸ From fitzStephen's account; see *EHD*, 753-4. For the best study of the bishops involved in the Becket controversy, see Knowles, *Episcopal Colleagues*.

¹⁹ *EHD*, 758.

journey to Canterbury. Chapter Three of this study will begin with the movements of Henry's knights in December 1170, the beginning of the first repercussion of Henry the Younger's coronation.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORIOGRAPHY

Primary Collections of Evidence

The resurgence of historical writing in the twelfth century has been frequently recognized in historiographical studies. This resurgence, combined with rising dialogue in philosophy, an increase in education at continental cathedral schools, and the advent of certain rhetorical arts has also prompted scholars to dub this set of events the “Renaissance of the Twelfth Century,” a period in which medieval versions of today’s humanities enjoyed a sort of rejuvenation.²⁰ Scholars who study the twelfth century have been the fortunate recipients of this renaissance, as a wealth of primary documents have survived to the present day. Some of the better-known figures from this period include Abbot Suger of St. Denis, Bernard of Clairvaux, John of Salisbury, Geoffrey of Monmouth, and St. Anselm of Canterbury.

Primary evidence concerning England in the twelfth century fell into two distinct periods of historical writing. The first ended around 1154, the year of King Stephen’s death and the corresponding rise of Henry II to the English throne. Several major documents fall into this category: the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* ends in 1154; Orderic Vitalis and William of Malmesbury both concluded their histories of England in 1142; the *Gesta Stephani* recorded only the reign of King Stephen (1135-54); and Henry of Huntingdon’s chronicle concluded

²⁰ For the increase in historical writing, see Antonia Grandsen, *Historical Writing in England c.550 to c.1307*, Vol. II (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1974); for a study of the three medieval rhetorical arts of the period (grammar and poetry or *ars poetriae*, letter writing or *ars dictaminis*, and preaching or *ars praedicandi*), see James J. Murphy, *Rhetoric in the Middle Ages* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1974); for a general study of the resurgence, see Charles Homer Haskins, *The Renaissance of the Twelfth Century* (Reprint, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993) and R.W. Southern, *Medieval Humanism and Other Studies* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1970).

its story in 1155.²¹ The second period of historical writing was as replete with authors as the first, with several writers discussing the reigns of Henry II, Richard I, and the early years of King John. The documents are varied in form and content, and those relating to England fall primarily into three categories: chronicles, saints' lives, and tertiary letters and court documents.

Chronicles

The medieval chronicle, called by Charles Haskins "a conspicuous feature of historical writing in the twelfth century,"²² came in many forms, from the year-by-year accounting system of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* to narrative structures concerning various regions and periods. In the later twelfth century, while several different types can be identified, in England, long narrative prose accounts predominated. Chroniclers were typically well informed on the regions close to their place of composition, and some incorporated local monastic chronicles into their own writings or traveled to gain additional information.²³ They could draw on their own eyewitnesses, the reports of those they met, and also various documents and letters available to them. Often, we can trace the sources of

²¹ See Swanton; Thomas Forester, trans, *The Ecclesiastical History of England and Normandy by Orderic Vitalis*, 4 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1968) or Orderic Vitalis, *Historia ecclesiastica/The Ecclesiastical History*, ed. and trans. Marjorie Chibnall, 6 vols. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1980); K.R. Potter, trans, *The Historia Novella by William of Malmesbury* (Edinburgh: Thomas Nelson & Sons, Ltd., 1955); Samuel Purchas, ed. and trans., *Gesta Stephani* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976); and Henry of Huntingdon, *Historia Anglorum: the History of the English People*, ed. and trans. Diana Greenaway (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996). For a thorough and most recent historiography of 1100 to 1135 in particular, see Hollister, *Henry I*, 1-29.

²² Haskins, 237.

²³ Monastic chronicles recorded mostly localized history but sometimes offered thoughts on larger issues. They often covered long periods of time, as they were written by monks or canons and enjoyed the advantage of continued composition throughout the Middle Ages. Some examples of these texts in the twelfth century include Eleanor Searle, ed. and trans., *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980); Henry T Riley, trans., *Ingulf's Chronicle of the Abbey of Croyland* (New York: AMS Press, 1968); and A.H. Davis, trans., *William Thorne's Chronicle of Saint Augustine's Abbey, Canterbury* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1934).

the assorted chronicles that have survived. Due to the wide range of issues and events documented within, as well as their straightforward chronologies, chronicles offer the best contextual evidence of the twelfth century. Chroniclers, more often than not, continued writing until their own deaths.²⁴

This is not, however, to speak of the chronicles' infallibility. Although the chroniclers generally possessed strong connections to Church as well as court, their accounts are sometimes problematic.²⁵ Often, the texts can be attributed to hearsay or heavy religious influences; Ernst Breisach notes, "The truth of historical accounts posed no real problem as long as the chronicler remained within the powerful, widely shared tradition based on Scripture, church teaching and respected chronicles."²⁶ Some chroniclers like Roger de Hoveden possessed strong connections to Henry II and enjoyed the financial backing of the court. Other chroniclers traveled little and show clear biases when discussing certain people or events. It is fortunate that other primary accounts exist with which to check the accuracy of the twelfth-century chronicles.

The major chronicle writers employed in this study include Roger de Hoveden, Ralph Diceto, Gervase of Canterbury, William of Newburgh, Robert de Monte, and Jordan Fantosme.²⁷ All of these writers were English, with the exception of Robert de Monte and

²⁴ For a recent analysis of such, see Robert Bartlett, *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings: 1075-1225* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), 625.

²⁵ Bartlett, 626.

²⁶ Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval and Modern*, 2nd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 129.

²⁷ See Roger de Hoveden, *The Annals of Roger de Hoveden*, trans. Henry T. Riley, 2 vols. (Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1968); William Stubbs, ed., *Radulphi de Diceto Opera Historia* (Rolls Series, 1876); William of Newburgh, *The History of William of Newburgh*, trans. Joseph Stevenson (Facsimile Reprint, Felinfach: Llanerch, 1996); Robert de Monte, *The Chronicles of Robert de Monte*, trans. Joseph Stevenson (Facsimile Reprint, Felinfach: Llanerch, 1991); and Jordan Fantosme, *Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle*, ed. and trans. R.C. Johnston (Oxford: Clarendon, 1981). For Gervase, see Stubbs, ed., *Actus Pontificum and Chronica in*

Fantosme, who were French. The details of these chronicles will be noted as they fall relevant in each chapter of this study.

Hagiography

The composition of *Lives*, or biographies of saints and martyrs, had long been a standard practice by the twelfth century. In the Anglo-Saxon period (c.500-1066), these *Lives* were written with a host of men as their subjects, including St. Gregory, St. Wilfrid, St. Guthlac, St. Boniface, and St. Anselm. *Lives* of a sort were also composed about kings such as Charlemagne and Alfred the Great (871-99).²⁸ Heavy in religious overtones, *Lives* sought to tell the story of saints who defended the rights of the Church or who impacted the history of a region in some memorable way. Frequently, miracles associated with these saints are recorded in their biographies. It is no surprise, then, that several *Lives* of Thomas Becket were composed, especially since he had been martyred while surreptitiously defending the rights of the Church against the ambitions of a secular king.

In the Middle Ages, this genre was the almost-exclusive domain of clerks and monks, and Becket was remembered by no less than ten of them. Nine *Lives* were written in Latin, again pointing to the role of clergy in hagiographical writing, and a tenth was in French. The *Lives* of Becket have been collected in various manners, though not all of the accounts have

Historical Works (Rolls series, 1879-80) and R. Willis, ed., *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Chicheley: Paul P.B. Minet, 1972), which contains Gervase's account of the 1174 fire at Canterbury Cathedral.
²⁸ See Bertram Colgrave, *A Life of Pope Gregory the Great, by an Anonymous Monk of Whitby* (Lawrence: U of Kansas Press, 1968) and *The Life of Bishop Wilfrid* (Reprint, Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985); Charles Williams Jones, trans., *Saints' Lives and Chronicles in Early England, Together with First English Translations of the Oldest Life of Pope St. Gregory the Great by a Monk at Whitby and The Life of St. Guthlac of Crowland by Felix* (Reprint, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1968); G.W. Robinson, *The Life of St. Boniface by Willibald* (Cambridge, MA, 1916); R.W. Southern, ed. and trans., *The Life of St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury* (London: T. Nelson, 1962); Einhard, *The Life of Charlemagne*, trans. Lewis Thorpe (London: The Folio Society, 1970); and Simon Keynes, trans., *Alfred the Great: Asser's Life of King Alfred and Other Contemporary Sources* (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1983)

yet been translated. William fitzStephen's *Life*, as an exception, has been translated and published separate from its peers.²⁹ J.C. Robertson's *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket* is the only collection of all ten *Lives*.³⁰ In this study, the relevant pieces of information from the hagiographical sources center on the movements of characters physically involved during the murder of Becket. Fortuitously, Edwin Abbott's *St Thomas of Canterbury* (1898) has collected and translated all of the needed passages from the *Lives* together, and it is his text that will provide needed information in this study.³¹

Letters and Court Documents

Tertiary evidence originating from several prominent figures of Henry II's reign have been collected and translated in modern works. Outlining the conversation surrounding events from the later twelfth century, these documents offer contextual evidence of a different perspective. They often fall in accordance, however, with the heavily religious nature of the *Lives* and some of the chronicles. It is no accident, due to the primacy of literate bishops and monks, that the majority of the surviving letters in particular are slanted in favor of Church affairs. The court documents are of a different nature, usually recording

²⁹ See William fitzStephen, *The Life and Death of Thomas Becket*, ed. and trans. George Greenaway (London: The Folio Society, 1965).

³⁰ The nine Latin *Lives* include the accounts of William fitzStephen, Edward Grim, Herbert of Bosham, John of Salisbury, Alan of Tewkesbury, Roger of Pontigny, William of Canterbury, Benedict of Peterborough, and the manuscript called "Anonymous of Lambeth." Guernes of Pont-Ste-Maxence composed a tenth *Life* in French. These men all had various connections to the archbishop; for a summary see *EHD*, 698-701. All the Latin *Lives*, along with the bulk of Becket's original correspondences, can be found in J.C. Robertson and J.B. Sheppard, ed., *Materials for the History of Thomas Becket*, 7 vols. (Rolls Series, 1875-1885). The *Quadriologus* is a medieval compilation (1199) of the accounts of John of Salisbury, Alan of Tewkesbury, William of Canterbury, Benedict of Peterborough and Herbert of Bosham. Eirkr Magnússon, ed., *Thomas Saga Erkebyskups*, 2 vols. (London: Longman & Co., 1875) is a nineteenth-century Icelandic rendition of Benedict of Peterborough's *Life*.

³¹ See Edwin A. Abbott, *St Thomas of Canterbury: His Death and Miracles*, 2 vols. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1898).

the financial activities of the court, and with the exception of royal charters, they offer little to no commentary where contemporary events are concerned.

Most of the surviving letters are from bishops and popes. The letters of Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux, and Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London, have been organized in modern collections.³² Arnulf was a close friend of Henry II, and Gilbert ran in similar circles in that he opposed virtually every move made by Thomas Becket; indeed, Becket had even excommunicated Gilbert in 1170.³³ John of Salisbury, a close friend of Becket who was present at the martyrdom and who later became the bishop of Chartres, wrote a large number of letters that have been collected in the last fifteen years.³⁴ The reigning pope during the period in question was Alexander III (d.1181), but his letters concerning the years 1170-74 have not yet been collected.³⁵ Becket himself was in constant correspondence with the aforementioned parties and many of his letters have survived as well, compiled today in

³² See Frank Barlow, ed., *The Letters of Arnulf of Lisieux*, Camden Society, 3rd Series, Vol. 61 (London: Royal Historical Society, 1939) and Z.N. Brooke, Dom Adrian Morey, and C. N. L. Brooke, ed., *The Letters and Charters of Gilbert Foliot, Abbot of Gloucester (1139-48), Bishop of Hereford (1148-63), and London (1163-87)* (London: Cambridge UP, 1967). Neither collection has been translated from Latin into English.

³³ For a modern study of Arnulf's loyalties, see Carolyn Poling-Schrieber, *The Dilemma of Arnulf of Lisieux: New Ideas Versus Old Ideals* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1990).

³⁴ See W.J. Millor, H.E. Butler, and C.N.L. Brook, ed., *The Letters of John of Salisbury*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986). The first volume includes letters from 1153-61, the second volume, 1163-80. John, perhaps more than anyone else, embodied the twelfth-century renaissance, as he wrote history, political commentary, and a defense of education: see Marjorie Chibnall, trans., *The Historia Pontificalis of John of Salisbury* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1986); Cary J. Nederman, ed. and trans., *Policraticus: of the Frivolities of Courtiers and the Footprints of Philosophers* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990); and Daniel D. McGarry, trans., *The Metalogicon, a Twelfth-Century Defense of the Verbal and Logical Arts of the Trivium* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1962).

³⁵ The closest collection concerns Alexander's German and Scandinavian correspondence: see Werner Ohnsorge, *Päpstliche und Gegenpäpstliche Legaten in Deutschland und Skandinavien, 1159-1181, von Werner Ohnsorge* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1929). Otherwise, Ohnsorge has collected Alexander's letters up to 1169; see *Die legaten Alexanders III. im Ersten Jahrzehnt seines Pontifikats (1150-1169)* (Berlin: E. Ebering, 1928). The anti-pope of the day was Calixtus III (1168-78), but no collections of his letters have yet been compiled. Otherwise, certain letters of Alexander can be found in Millor's collection and Hoveden's chronicle.

Latin within the aforementioned *Materials* and translated in additional texts.³⁶ Roger de Hoveden also recorded several letters from various French clergy in his chronicle.

Tertiary royal documents also deserve some mention here. The remaining writs and charters of Henry II are compiled in the second volume of *English Historical Documents*, alongside excerpts from many of the *Lives* of Becket and some chronicle entries. The Pipe Roll Society compiled the surviving financial records of the Exchequer in multiple volumes in their original Latin.³⁷ Insofar as these documents concern individual accounts, land grants, or royal assizes, they are of little relevance to the present study. Of greater value are the treaties resolved between Henry II and other parties: the Compromise of Avranches, agreed to by Henry and Pope Alexander III in 1172, and the Treaty of Falaise, agreed to by Henry and William I, king of the Scots in 1174. Both of these treaties are to be found in *English Historical Documents*.³⁸

Secondary Materials

A considerable amount of scholarship has been generated in the last 150 years on both Thomas Becket and Henry II, and new histories have appeared in the last twenty years on a regular basis. Whereas some medieval periods have been the victims of a paucity of surviving documents, the wealth of primary materials in the later twelfth century, as noted

³⁶ See J.A. Giles, trans, *The Life and Letters of Thomas à Becket*, 2 vols. (London: Whitaker & Co., 1846). For the most recent collection, see Anne J. Duggan, *The Correspondence of Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, 1162-1170* (New York: Clarendon, 2000). Duggan has also written a study on the codicology of the letters' manuscripts; see *Thomas Becket: A Textual History of his Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980).

³⁷ See *The Publications of the Pipe Roll Society*, London, 1884 (Reprint, Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1966). The collection includes printed versions of the *Great Rolls of the Exchequer*, the *Great Roll of the Pipe*, and the *Pipe Rolls*. It covers the financial records of the reigns of Henry II of England through Richard I.

³⁸ See *EHD*, 773 and 413, respectively.

above, have provided a fruitful garden for historians to explore. The secondary materials in print vary somewhat in terms of approach, scope, and quality.

Thomas Becket has the distinction of being one of the most heavily discussed figures from the twelfth century. Known for his famous dispute with Henry II and his martyrdom, Becket is also remembered by the many miracles that soon followed his death. Scholars have long investigated the archbishop's life, death, and his effect on the politics of the Church in the Middle Ages and even later.³⁹ Today, the standard scholarly text for modern study of Becket is Frank Barlow's *Thomas Becket*, an exhaustive effort first published in 1986.⁴⁰ Its exceptional depth of research and analysis has reduced the usefulness of other older and less comprehensive texts about Becket. Yet Barlow owes much to his predecessors, scholars who investigated the archbishop through a series of differing methodologies.

These other "Becket" texts include vary in age and usefulness. The newest text is William Urry's *Thomas Becket: The Last Days* (1999).⁴¹ The main focus of Urry's text is the year of the archbishop's death, 1170. In particular, Urry discusses the days following Becket's return from exile on 30 November up until his death on 29 December. This book is not a scholarly reference but an intriguing story with a strong localized historical element.⁴² David Knowles's *Thomas Becket* (1970) is a short narrative of the archbishop's entire life.⁴³ The text often condenses primary evidence in the name of brevity and coherence but is

³⁹ See Thomas M. Jones, ed., *The Becket Controversy* (New York: Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1970) for short extracted accounts from the twelfth and eighteenth through twentieth centuries. Another useful work is John Butler's study into the final resting place of Becket's skeleton, which remains a mystery even today; see *The Quest for Becket's Bones: The Mystery of the Relics of St. Thomas Becket of Canterbury* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1995).

⁴⁰ See Frank Barlow, *Thomas Becket* (Berkeley: U of California Press, 1986).

⁴¹ See William Urry, *Thomas Becket: His Last Days* (Stroud, England: Sutton Publishing, 1999).

⁴² The book was published posthumously. Urry's original manuscript with complete notations will soon reside in the Cathedral Archives of Canterbury; as of June 2000, they were not yet available.

⁴³ See David Knowles, *Thomas Becket* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1970).

nevertheless still heavily used among Becket scholars. Richard Winston's *Thomas Becket* was published just before Knowles's text. Though it is a larger and more comprehensive study, it was published with few scholarly notes.⁴⁴ The older *Thomas Becket* by Robert Speaight (1949) has fallen into relative disuse amidst the flurry of Becket scholarship in the later twentieth century.⁴⁵

Abbott's aforementioned nineteenth-century *St. Thomas of Canterbury* will be used heavily in Chapter Three of this study. Abbott's text is one of the oldest secondary studies of the archbishop, but despite its usefulness as a resource, the book is referenced little by contemporary scholars. The text remains, however, a strong documentation of the final moments of Becket's life because it focuses solely on the day of the murder. Constructing events from passages in the *Lives*, Abbott footnotes every one of these passages in their entirety, in the original Latin. The approach, while sometimes tedious to read, enables careful study of the original documents while analyzing the last moments of Becket's life.

The seminal text on King Henry II of England remains W.L. Warren's *Henry II* (1973). Replete with full genealogical tables, maps, and the most comprehensive view into the king's life, Warren's book has rendered most other studies of Henry II's reign somewhat obsolete. Richard Barber's *Henry Plantagenet* was the shorter predecessor to Warren's scholarship.⁴⁶ Other texts have tackled the period at large: Kate Norgate's now dated *England Under the Angevin Kings*, Caroline Bingham's *The Crowned Lions*, Richard Mortimer's *Angevin England, 1154-1258*, Barlow's *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, and

⁴⁴ See Richard Winston, *Thomas Becket* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1967).

⁴⁵ See Robert Speaight, *Thomas Becket*, 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1949).

⁴⁶ See Richard Barber, *Henry Plantagenet: A Biography* (London: Shenvall Press, Ltd., 1964).

Bartlett's *England Under the Norman and Angevin Kings* represent comprehensive surveys of Henry II and his lineage, his descendents, and England in general.⁴⁷

Additional secondary materials become useful in the particular discussions of each chapter of this study. Chapter Three, which examines the structural details of Canterbury Cathedral, employs several architectural histories of the building. These include the aforementioned *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* by R. Willis, Arthur Henderson's older *Canterbury Cathedral: Then and Now*, and Francis Woodman's *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*.⁴⁸ Woodman's study is the most comprehensive in that it focuses entirely on the historical changes made structurally at Canterbury since its inception in Anglo-Saxon times up to the present day. The newer edition *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* compiles twelve modern studies of varying architectural relevance, including queries into the cathedral archives, monuments, liturgical traditions, and monastic life.⁴⁹ In Chapter Five, the main secondary references are the recent biography of the Scottish king William "the Lion" by D.D.R. Owen and the various military studies of Matthew Strickland.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ See Kate Norgate, *England Under the Angevin Kings*, 2 vols. (New York: Haskell House Publishers, Ltd., 1969); Caroline Bingham, *The Crowned Lions: The Early Plantagenet Kings* (Totowa: Rowman and Littlefield, 1978); Richard Mortimer, *Angevin England, 1154-1258* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994); and Barlow, *The Feudal Kingdom of England*, 5th ed. (London: Longman, 1999).

⁴⁸ See Arthur E. Henderson, *Canterbury Cathedral: Then and Now* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1938) and Francis Woodman, *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981).

⁴⁹ See Patrick Collinson, Nigel Ramsay and Margaret Sparks, ed., *A History of Canterbury Cathedral* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1995).

⁵⁰ See D.D.R. Owen, *William the Lion, 1143-1214: Kingship and Culture* (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 1997). For Strickland, see "Securing the North: Invasion and the Strategy of Defence in Twelfth-Century Anglo-Scottish Warfare," *Anglo-Norman Warfare: Studies in Late Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman Military Organization and Warfare* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1993); "Arms and Men: War, Loyalty and Lordship in Jordan Fantosme's Chronicle," *Medieval Knighthood*, Vol. IV (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1992); *War and Chivalry: The Conduct and Perception of War in England and Normandy, 1066-1217* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996); and ed., *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare in Medieval Britain and France: Proceedings of the 1995 Harlaxton Symposium* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1998).

CHAPTER THREE: THOMAS BECKET'S MURDER, 1170

Narrative of the Murder

The story of Thomas Becket's murder has been told and retold through the ages, with the general order of events now relatively well known to most students of history. Barlow and Urry both offer modern reconstructions that serve to strengthen the traditional tale.⁵¹ For the purposes of this study, a short narrative of the murder is necessary in order to understand some of the finer points of contention.

Though peace had surreptitiously been achieved between Henry II and Becket on 22 July 1170 at Fréteval, that peace ended on 30 November of the same year.⁵² Henry II's oldest son Henry the Younger had been crowned king by the bishops of York, Durham, London, and Salisbury in June.⁵³ Upon his return to England in November, Becket excommunicated these four bishops on the grounds that they violated the primacy of the archbishop of Canterbury by crowning the young king themselves. This decree of Becket led to Henry II's outburst in France and the departure of four murderous knights to England. The knights, named Richard le Bret, Hugh de Morville, William de Tracy, and Reginald FitzUrse, moved quickly, crossing the Channel in a single day. After spending the night at

⁵¹ Barlow, *Becket*, 245-7; Urry, 127-38.

⁵² See *EHD*, 754-6 for the reconciliation of Henry and Becket.

⁵³ Henry the Younger was the first living son of Henry II but the second born; William, the first-born, had died three years after his birth in 1153. See *EHD*, 753-4 for the account of the young Henry's coronation.

Saltwood castle on the coast, they traveled straightaway to Canterbury, planning to either arrest or to dispatch the troublesome archbishop in the name of their liege lord Henry II.⁵⁴

In the early evening of 29 December 1170, the four knights, unarmed after leaving their weapons underneath a tree in the courtyard, arrived at the bishop's palace in Canterbury and demanded that Becket withdraw his sentence of excommunication from the heads of the four English bishops.⁵⁵ Failing in their demands, the knights departed and returned to the tree where they had stashed their weapons.⁵⁶ Upon their return, they found the palace door to be locked. A subsequent assault upon the wooden door with hatchets and an axe caused the monks inside (those not in the cathedral choir singing vespers) to hurriedly move Becket towards the cathedral. Becket was unwilling to do as much, and several of the *Lives* noted that the monks had to physically move the archbishop onwards themselves.⁵⁷ A man named Henry of Auxerre by William fitzStephen carried the bishop's cross before the group.⁵⁸

The procession led Becket through the cloisters to the northwest transept of the cathedral.⁵⁹ Benedict of Peterborough noted that two cellarers heard Becket's approach and unlocked the door for him from the inside.⁶⁰ They entered the room and the monks barred the door behind them; Herbert of Bosham wrote that this first group of monks then fled the

⁵⁴ See Urry, 89-95 for a discussion of the knights' specific movements.

⁵⁵ Short biographies of the four knights are found in Barlow, *Becket*, 235-6.

⁵⁶ The most detailed accounts of the pre-murder events are by Grim and fitzStephen; see *EHD*, 762-4 and fitzStephen, 149-52, respectively.

⁵⁷ The forceful march was noted by Grim, fitzStephen, William of Canterbury, Benedict, and "Anonymous"; see Abbott, 45-49 and Urry, 120.

⁵⁸ While most accounts agreed that this Henry was actually Edward Grim, a visitor who would have been somewhat unfamiliar to fitzStephen, Barlow mistakenly identifies him as a different person altogether (*Becket*, 244).

⁵⁹ In 1170, this was the only north transept of the cathedral. After the 1174 fire and the subsequent rebuilding of the choir, two additional transepts were added on the eastern side of the building. For ease of reference, this study refers to the martyrdom room as the modern northwest transept.

⁶⁰ Abbott, 60.

scene, escaping throughout various parts of the cathedral.⁶¹ William of Canterbury wrote that two servant boys brought news of the archbishop's arrival to the monks singing vespers in the choir; the monks ran, as fitzStephen wrote, "trembling and astounded at so strange and vast a tumult" to the transept to greet Becket.⁶² The archbishop began to ascend the eastern stairs to the choir, where he was to join in the evensong, but the knights arrived at the transept and began to bang on the door.⁶³ Against the wishes of the monks there, as "Anonymous" noted, Becket ordered the door unlocked, saying "we ought not to make a castle of the house of God."⁶⁴

This being done, the four now-armed knights charged into the room, bringing with them the subdeacon Hugh of Horsea, whom they had picked up along the way.⁶⁵ All but three of Becket's clerks immediately fled for safety, leaving only fitzStephen, Edward Grim, and Robert of Merton by the archbishop's side.⁶⁶ The knights demanded to know the whereabouts of the archbishop, who then descended the eastern steps saying, "Here I am: what is your will?"⁶⁷ The knights then tried to arrest Becket, grabbing and pulling at his vestments, but they could not move him away from the pillar and wall by which he stood.⁶⁸ After a bit of shouting back and forth, the knights began their attack. The first blow swatted the bishop's miter off his head. The second strike was partially prevented by Grim, who stood behind Becket and thrust his arm out in a protective movement. His arm was nearly cut in half, and the blow also caught Becket, who had bowed his head in prayer, and sliced

⁶¹ Abbott, 60.

⁶² Abbott, 59.

⁶³ From fitzStephen's *Life*; see Abbott, 65.

⁶⁴ Abbott, 70.

⁶⁵ Hugh would be the one to administer the final blow; see Barlow 247. William of Canterbury wrote that three of the knights carried hatchets, a fourth an axe, and all of them brandished swords; see Abbott, 79.

⁶⁶ Barlow, *Becket*, 245. Abbott argues that William of Canterbury, a monk, was also present (59).

⁶⁷ From John of Salisbury's *Life*; see Abbott, 89.

⁶⁸ From Grim's *Life*; see Abbott, 102.

into the top of his crown.⁶⁹ A third blow severed the crown completely, and Hugh of Horsea finally scattered the archbishop's brains with his sword. With Becket lying dead on the stones, the knights then left the cathedral and returned to the palace, where they beat servants and stole what horses and monies they could find. Afterwards, they retired south to Saltwood castle.⁷⁰

Abbott, Barlow, Urry, Knowles, and other modern historians have carefully analyzed the precise details of Becket's murder. Every word and action mentioned in the *Lives* has been carefully studied, each account frequently compared to its peers in the hope of constructing an accurate, blow-by-blow account of the archbishop's death. Some of the *Lives* have been discounted as inaccurate or circumstantial; others, lauded for their precision and impartiality. Margaret Gibson wrote, "Contemporary sources throw vivid and inconsistent light on the day's final events"; both the accuracy and the vividness of the *Lives* should thus be historically questioned.⁷¹

The goal of this chapter is twofold. First, it seeks to flesh out the architectural scene of Becket's murder. Authors have frequently but only briefly noted the physical appearance of the cathedral's northwest transept, and none have sought to examine its size and shape, conditions of light, or the probable vantage points afforded the witnesses to the crime.⁷² Second, this chapter argues against the specificity of modern renditions of the actual murder. It is the author's position that none of Becket's biographers could have possibly seen the exact sequence of sword blows they related, due to the number of people looking on, the

⁶⁹ *Thomas Saga Erkibyskups*, 543.

⁷⁰ Barlow, *Becket*, 248.

⁷¹ Margaret Gibson, "Normans and Angevins, 1070-1220," *A History of Canterbury Cathedral*, 62.

⁷² The mentions are generally quite short: "In the heat of the affray the barons could probably see no more than the onlookers" (Barlow, *Becket*, 247) and "In the deepening gloom they saw monks and clerks standing around" (Urry, 127) typify such spatial descriptions.

architectural limitations of the room, and the location and condition of the characters involved, including the writers themselves. In light of the restricted vantage points of the primary witnesses, the author prefers that Becket's murder be henceforth related in general terms that exclude precise motions and words that the biographers may not have been able to completely discern.

The Scene of the Crime: Canterbury's Northwest Transept

It is necessary to return to the scene of the crime, the northwest transept of Canterbury Cathedral, and examine the physical layout of the room in which Becket died.⁷³ Such a process has been used in an investigation of another medieval murder, the death of the Norman king William Rufus (1087-1100). On a subject that has often been compared to Becket's murder, Duncan Grinnell-Milne returned to the scene of Rufus's death by an arrowshot in the New Forest of England.⁷⁴ The author remarked:

Why in the name of commonsense, I asked myself, was I going to delve into this ancient mystery 'on the spot'? What did I expect to find: Norman footprints in the dust? All very well to argue that, since a significant part of my boyhood had been spent in the Forest, at least I knew the lie of the land; if I knew it so well, why bother to go there? Because, for one thing, very few professional historians have ever done so; and, for another, because the right place to start a criminal investigation must surely be at the scene of the crime, provided of course one is sure of the scene.⁷⁵

⁷³ The author, with permission of the Canterbury Cathedral Vesturer, did so on 23 May 2000.

⁷⁴ For a comparative study of Rufus and Becket, see Hugh Ross Williamson, *The Arrow and the Sword* (London: Faber and Faber, Ltd., 1957).

⁷⁵ Duncan Grinnell-Milne, *The Killing of William Rufus: An Investigation in the New Forest* (New York: Augustus M. Kelley Publishers, 1968), 11.

The history Thomas Becket's martyrdom should also proceed in this fashion, especially since the place of his death still exists and remains, for the most part, structurally unchanged. The wealth of primary evidence noted in Chapter Two can mislead historians with sheer amounts of detail, but an investigation into the physical limitations of the transept reveals that Becket's biographers were hampered in their observations. The shape of the room, combined with dark shadows and masses of onlookers, prevented anyone from enjoying a good view of the murder. Indeed, it seems that the northwest transept was filled with a number of people watching, presumably from every conceivable angle.

The Spectators

While often mentioning these onlookers, historians have not attempted to quantify the people present at the murder scene. This number is important because, as Figure 1 shows, the northwest transept was not a very large room in the twelfth century, and it is still not today.⁷⁵ The room could only accommodate so many people comfortably. Urry remarked on the situation: "In the deepening gloom they [Henry's knights] saw monks and clerks standing around and cried out to them, 'Don't you move!'"⁷⁶ Who exactly were these monks and clerks?

The monks formed two loose groups, each arriving from different places. The first had come with Becket from the bishop's palace, some of them having dragged the archbishop into the cathedral from the cloister. Herbert of Bosham, as already noted, claimed that these monks fled from the scene, running away through the crypts and hiding

⁷⁵ Taken from Willis, 137 and edited. The wall indicated in Figure 1 is a modern construction.

⁷⁶ Urry, 127.

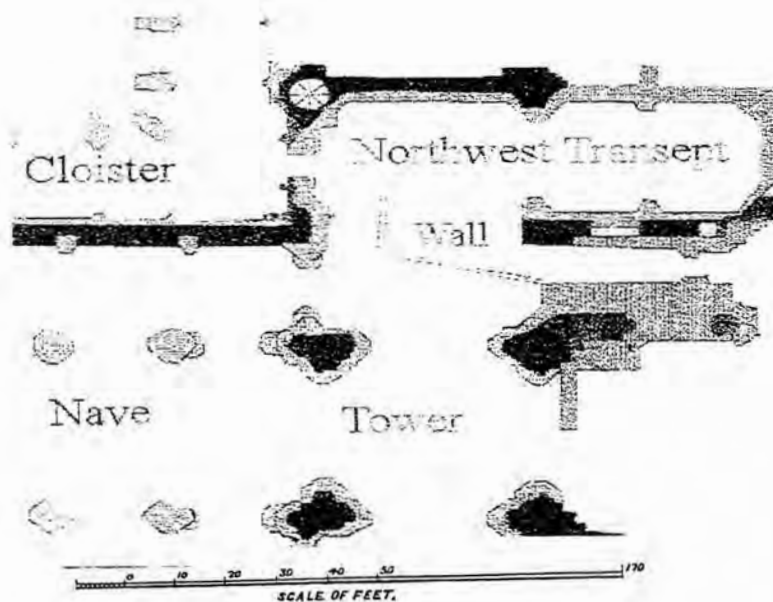


Figure 1: Northwest transept as seen today.

underneath nearby altars. Abbott, however, notes that Herbert is actually referring to the later flight of Becket's clerks from the transept.⁷⁸ No other biographer noted the flight of this first group of monks; it can be safely argued, then, that Herbert's timeline was flawed and that at least some of the monks that had dragged Becket into the cathedral remained with him there. There could not have been many monks in that group, as most would have been singing vespers at the time, but there must have been at least four. FitzStephen noted, "some cast hands on him and raise him from [his feet] and force him [onwards]. Other try to persuade him that he ought to go because he was to attend nones and vespers."⁷⁹ The plurality of FitzStephen's words indicates, at minimum, the archbishop being pulled by two

⁷⁸ Abbott, 60. Herbert's mistake is understandable because he was not in Canterbury at the time of the murder.

⁷⁹ Abbott, 70.

monks and spoken to by at least two more. In addition, the man identified as Henry of Auxerre (who was most likely Edward Grim) carried a cross before them all. This first group, therefore, numbered at least six men, excluding Becket's clerks, who will be discussed shortly.

The second group of monks was at evensong, and they came running from the choir into the cathedral upon the arrival of the archbishop. Grim, fitzStephen, William of Canterbury, and "Anonymous" all mention the rush of these monks into the northwest transept. The exact number of monks in this second group is hard to measure. There were around 140 monks at Canterbury Priory in the late twelfth-century, but it is inconceivable that all of them were present at the murder; certainly, they would not have all fit into the northwest transept!⁸⁰ Instead, as William of Canterbury noted, "Some of the brethren persisted still in their prayers, some made for passages of outlet, some wished to help [the Archbishop]."⁸¹ The majority of Canterbury's monks would have been at vespers, however, and if even a fraction came to witness the tumult in the transept the number would have been sizable. Among these monks were two of Becket's later biographers, William of Canterbury and Benedict of Peterborough. Urry wrote of monks crowding the staircase, others moving around the transept, and still others standing and weeping at the sight of still-living Becket.⁸² These monks did not flee the scene when the knights entered; Grim mentioned the crowd making an uproar, and fitzStephen wrote that one of the knights addressed the monks, asking

⁸⁰ R.A.L. Smith, *Canterbury Cathedral Priory: A Study in Monastic Administration* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1969), 3.

⁸¹ Abbott, 59.

⁸² Urry, 123.

about Becket's whereabouts.⁸³ An extremely conservative estimate of ten monks coming from vespers into the transept will be a sufficient number for this study.

In addition, Becket was accompanied through the cloisters and into the cathedral by several of his clerks. When the knights burst into the northwest transept, most of the clerks fled for safety. John of Salisbury was one of them, and others followed him. Of all the clerks originally present, only fitzStephen, Grim, and Robert of Merton remained in the room when Becket died. Thus, the early occupants of the room included Becket, Grim, who was the cross-bearer, at least four monks, and the two clerks fitzStephen and Robert of Merton; a total of eight men. Two other boys, called "cellarers" by Benedict of Peterborough and "servant lads" by William of Canterbury, then ran to announce Becket's arrival to the monks singing vespers.⁸⁴ It is unknown whether or not these boys rejoined the gathering crowd in the transept. When the second group of monks (conservatively estimated at ten) joined the others in the room, the transept was then filled with a minimum of eighteen to twenty men and boys; indeed, there may have been many more.

Seculars formed the final component of people at the murder scene. Though they had brought along at least twelve other men with them, only the four knights entered the transept from the cloister door.⁸⁵ Along with them came the subdeacon Hugh of Horsea, who would deliver the final blow to the fallen archbishop.⁸⁶ In sum, at least 22 to 24 men were present in Canterbury's northwest transept in the early evening of 29 December 1170. To this number may be added a crowd of common Canterbury folk, who may have been attending

⁸³ Abbott, 87.

⁸⁴ Abbott, 59-60.

⁸⁵ There were, according to fitzStephen, also some citizens of Canterbury and a contingent from the Abbey of St. Augustine's, headed by Walter, the abbey marshal; see Urry, 125.

⁸⁶ Abbott, 58. Grim called Hugh by the name of "Mauclerk."

vespers that evening. William of Canterbury wrote, “he [Becket] stepped inside the Minster, but stood back on the threshold, and driving back the common folk, who crowded round him as though to see some spectacle, ‘What is it,’ he asked, ‘that these folk fear?’”⁸⁷ These residents, combined with twenty or so monks, knights, clerks, and the archbishop, constituted a large crowd in a room of roughly 1200 square feet.⁸⁸ The number of people, combined with the records of much shouting and general uproar of the spectators, made it unlikely that a person could listen to the excited dialogue between the knights and Becket with any high degree of precision. Even today, anyone taking a tour through the cathedral, amidst the near-constant stream of excited tourists, quickly discovers the high decibel level in the martyrdom room.

The Transept Itself

The nature of Canterbury’s northwest transept would have severely hampered the view of anyone watching events unfold on that night. Figure 2 shows the shape of the transept oriented to the north.⁸⁹ Looking east, the room was divided in two by short steps. The easternmost apse held six altars of deceased churchmen, while the square western half contained the altar of St. Benedict, the cloister door, a large pillar (to which the arrow

⁸⁷ Abbott, 66.

⁸⁸ This figure is for the gallery only, excluding the space in the stairwells or in the apse of the transept.

⁸⁹ Taken from Willis, 38 and edited. The architectural account of Gervase of Canterbury allows for a rather precise reconstruction of the stonewalls and sculpture at Canterbury; see Deborah Kahn, *Canterbury Cathedral and its Romanesque Sculpture* (Austin: U of Texas Press, 1991), 141.

points), and three sets of stairs: a dual set leading to the crypt or choir, and a flight into the central tower. The transept itself was two stories high.⁹⁰

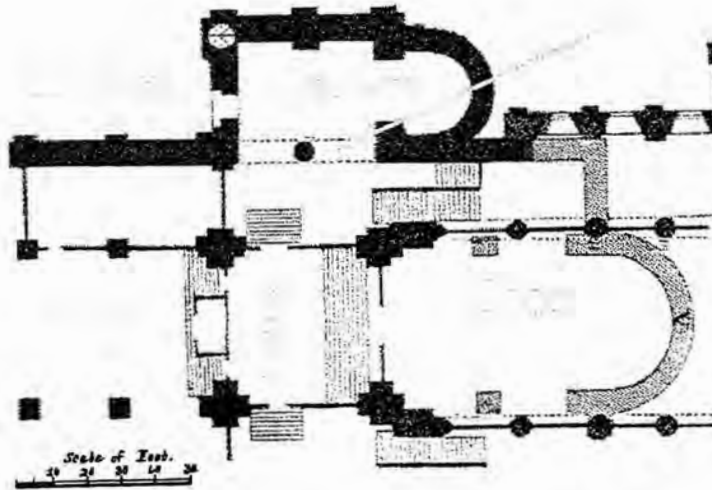


Figure 2: Northern side of Canterbury Cathedral, c.1174.

Becket stood upon the eastern steps to the choir when the knights entered the room, to the southeast of the pillar. In his verbal confrontation with the knights, the archbishop moved down into the gap between the pillar and the stairs, Edward Grim close by side.⁹¹ The pillar supported three walls on its vaults; Gervase of Canterbury noted that it was taken out after the great fire in 1174, after which the choir was rebuilt in the Early English Gothic style.⁹²

William of Canterbury's *Life* described the exact placement of Becket, Grim, and the knights. The archbishop stood with his back to the south transept wall, to the east of the

⁹⁰ Henderson, 17, 28-9. There was also a wheel staircase in the northwestern corner of the transept, which led up to the second story and perhaps also down to the crypt.

⁹¹ *EHD*, 766.

⁹² Willis, 37, 41. The entire transept would be rebuilt between 1378-1450, but the original walls from Lanfranc's church remained while the eastern end of the transept was extended; see H.J.A. Strik, "Remains of the Lanfranc Building in the Great Central Tower and the North-West Choir/Transept Area," *The British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions for the Year 1979 V: Medieval Art and Architecture at Canterbury Before 1220*, ed. Nicola Coldstream and Peter Draper (Leeds: W.S. Maney and Son Ltd., 1982), 20-25 and Woodman, 34.

pillar. On his left stood Grim, perhaps directly behind the pillar, closing the gap between Becket and the western portion of the room.⁹³ William de Tracy, Richard le Bret, and Hugh de Morville stood to the east of the pillar, facing the southern wall; Reginald FitzUrse stood to the west of the pillar, perhaps gazing at Grim or around the pillar at Becket.⁹⁴

Since the engagement took place in the southeastern corner of the transept, the activity would have been hard to see from the rest of the room. As Figure 2 shows, anyone standing in the eastern apse of the transept would have had a more limited view of the proceedings, as the angle was somewhat severe.⁹⁵

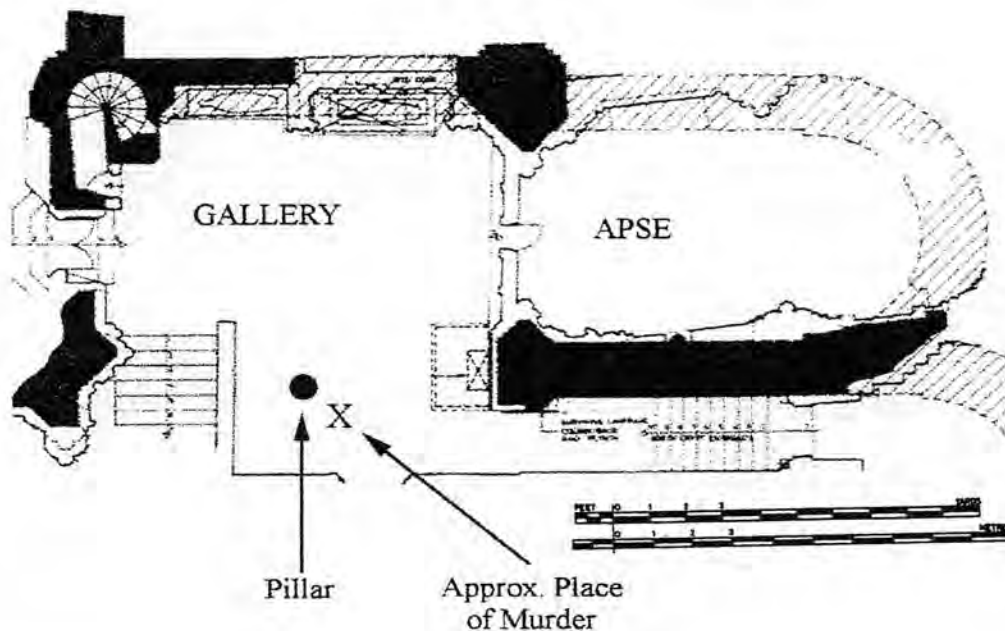


Figure 3: The Martyrdom room.

⁹³ Abbott, 89. This is important, as William's *Life* clearly contradicts the modern belief that Becket was struck in front of the altar of St. Benedict. In actuality, he took his wounds by the southern wall, and fell or was perhaps dragged before the altar after the knights had departed. Grim notes that the knights could not physically move Becket from the pillar; see *EHD*, 767. Even today at Canterbury, a white altar remembers his martyrdom. See Abbott, 96 for a discussion of such.

⁹⁴ Abbott, 79.

⁹⁵ Taken from Strik, 25 and edited. The stone screen between the apse and gallery did not exist in 1170, nor did the door on the southern wall behind the murder scene. The term "gallery" has been used to name the transept floor to the west of the transept apse.

Barlow noted the darkness of the room, lit only by the flickering lights in the distant choir and the nearby candles; this gloomy light could only have hampered the view of anyone watching.⁹⁶ In fact, the spot where Becket fell was the darkest part of the room because of the closeness of the chapter house, which would have dictated a gloomy and quiet entrance, in this case, possibly a night stair.⁹⁷ Further hampering the light was the obstruction of a tribune bridge directly overhead, supported by the pillar by which the combatants stood.⁹⁸ This bridge would have obstructed the view of those monks standing underneath the central tower or by the Lady Chapel in the eastern nave. Anyone in the internal gallery of the transept had their view of the archbishop blocked by both the pillar and the backs of the four knights and Hugh of Horsea, who stood behind them. Indeed, as Gervase noted, the pillar and its vaulting were taken down, “that the altar, elevated on the place of the martyrdom, might be seen from a greater distance”; evidently, the pillar obstructed the view of the general area in which Becket stood.⁹⁹ In light of the physical features of the northwest transept, the lack of suitable light in the most critical area of the room, and the placement of the knights, therefore, it would have been extremely difficult to discern the exact movements or words of Becket and the knights.

⁹⁶ Barlow, *Becket*, 245. Abbott argues that the date of 29 December allowed very little outside light into the cathedral (84).

⁹⁷ Woodman, 40.

⁹⁸ Woodman, 31. The bridge is indicated by dashed lines in Figure 2 that run through the transept pillar; this is the likely spot of two of the three vaults coming off the pillar. The third vault ran north to the outer transept wall.

⁹⁹ Willis, 41.

The Reliability of the Primary Witnesses

Six authors of the *Lives* were in Canterbury at the time of the murder, but no more than four were witness to the event itself.¹⁰⁰ John of Salisbury fled with Becket's other clerks, and it is not certain that "Anonymous of Lambeth" was truly present at the murder.¹⁰¹ The *Lives* written by non-witnesses are marked by more hearsay than the others, and while they are valuable for other portions of Becket's life and the miracles following his martyrdom, their information on the murder scene itself is more or less borrowed from other *Lives* or reconstructed from interviews conducted after the affair. William fitzStephen and Edward Grim were two of the three clerks that did not flee the murder scene when the knights arrived, and William of Canterbury was one of the monks who rushed to the scene during vespers. It is possible that Benedict of Peterborough, another monk at Canterbury priory, also witnessed the murder. The accounts of these four eyewitnesses, then, comprise the heart of the evidence, but how accurate are their primary narratives of Becket's murder?¹⁰²

¹⁰⁰ The four other biographers were not in Canterbury in December 1170: Guernes visited Canterbury after the martyrdom, Roger of Pontigny (de Monte) was in France (both men met Becket during his exile), Becket had sent Herbert of Bosham on an assignment a few days before the murder, and Alan of Tewkesbury did not arrive at Christ Church until 1174.

¹⁰¹ The strongest evidence for this lies in the fact that "Anonymous" fails to ever mention the presence of Edward Grim or that clerk's interpolation of his arm to the second blow, a detail told by all four primary witnesses.

¹⁰² For a study on the hagiographical conventions of the Becket biographers, see Jennifer L. O'Reilly, "The Double Martyrdom of Thomas Becket: Hagiography or History," *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History*, Vol. XVII (New York: AMS Press, 1985), 184-247.

Edward Grim and William FitzStephen

For the last century, Grim and FitzStephen have been understood to be the most sober and reliable witnesses to the murder. Both men were present at the bishop's palace, both accompanied Becket to the northwest transept, and both watched him die. FitzStephen watched the action from an unknown position on the gallery floor, but Grim played a direct role and was wounded by one of the knights during the initial struggle between the knights and Becket. Grim finished his *Life* in 1172, soon after the martyrdom, but FitzStephen, because of his favorable position in Henry II's court, waited until the king's death in 1189 before making his sympathetic version of Becket's death public.¹⁰³

Despite their unique vantage points, however, it is unlikely that either of these two accounts portray the murder scene with complete accuracy. FitzStephen's view would have been blocked by the backs of the knights and by the pillar around which the combatants stood. The monks, clerks, and commoners in the gallery certainly did not stand directly behind the knights, peeking over their shoulders at the conflict. Instead, they probably backed up a good distance to keep away from the angry knights and their long Norman weapons.¹⁰⁴ Those that got too close paid the price; William of Canterbury told of one bystander being struck by the flat of a sword.¹⁰⁵ Grim noted that one knight even kept "those who pressed thronging in" away from the developing action.¹⁰⁶ In addition, the pillar area was extremely dark, preventing FitzStephen from making out specific actions. He would also

¹⁰³ *EHD*, 699.

¹⁰⁴ William of Canterbury admits this fear of the swords after the first blow fell on Becket, "thinking (even as the rest) that I likewise was to be 'struck' with the sword"; see Abbott, 153.

¹⁰⁵ Abbott, 179.

¹⁰⁶ Abbott, 150. "Anonymous" claims this knight was Hugh de Morville.

have been subject to the loud din in the room, the jostling crowd of onlookers, and the confusing clash of swords and tangle of bodies. Grim's accuracy, due to his location at Becket's side, should be accepted thoroughly up until the second sword strike that nearly cut off his arm. His account becomes quite general as he pulled back to consider his wound, his view of the sequence of sword strikes likely impaired by the incredible pain of his wound.

Benedict of Peterborough and William of Canterbury

Benedict and William were both monks at Canterbury priory, and both were likely witnesses to the murder. William was of that group that broke off from vespers to meet the archbishop in the northwest transept.¹⁰⁷ Benedict's position is not known; he demonstrates knowledge of events both in the cloister and within the transept, but he never mentions that he was part of the archbishop's retinue. No biographer mentions his presence in the archbishop's palace. Though he would be elected prior in 1175, in 1170 he was likely have with the other monks at Vespers.

Benedict and William, therefore, both entered the transept with the second group of monks. Their entrance was not necessarily simultaneous. While some monks rushed to the scene, others tarried with their prayers, and the result was probably a stream of monks entering the northwest transept at different times. Grim wrote that the monks had all arrived after the knights had entered but before the first sword blow, so any late-arriving monks were likely caught watching from the eastern choir stairwell or the steps moving north from the

¹⁰⁷ This is so because William wrote of the servant lads who came to find the monks in the choir; he also recorded the dialogue of the monks there at evensong.

central tower area.¹⁰⁸ Those who had immediately run to the transept upon hearing the servant boys' cries probably watched from the gallery floor, north of the large pillar. The exact vantage points of Benedict and William, unfortunately, are unknown.

Regardless, Benedict and William would seem to have been in good position to watch the murder. As Urry points out, William ran up the stairs and back into the choir in fright after the first blow fell on the archbishop, so he must have been close to the action.¹⁰⁹ At the same time, other monks who stood in the transept also dispersed around the room. Benedict may have been one of them taking refuge, as William noted, by a nearby altar.¹¹⁰ His vantage point was a good one, and he noted that the third blow was struck because the knight's companions had chided him for his lack of effort.¹¹¹ Even so, he was subject to the same audio and visual impairments of fitzStephen: the noisy crowd, the extreme darkness of the room's corner, and the backs of the slashing knights.

The Need for a General Narrative

The lack of accuracy in the *Lives* is apparent in their varying depictions of the sequence of blows that fell upon the archbishop. The agent behind the first blow that sliced into Grim's arm is disputed: fitzStephen named him as William de Tracy, while Grim and William of Canterbury thought him to be Reginald FitzUrse. William de Tracy, according to William of Canterbury, was later said to boast that he had cut off the arm of John of

¹⁰⁸ Abbott, 87.

¹⁰⁹ Urry, 130. William was conscious of his sins and unready to die, so he fled; see Abbott, 153.

¹¹⁰ Abbott, 178.

¹¹¹ Abbott, 154. No other biographer mentions this detail, a further testament to Benedict's proximity.

Salisbury. While de Tracy obviously confused John with Grim, William was again arguing (with fitzStephen, it seems) that FitzUrse did not strike this first blow. It is interesting that Grim and fitzStephen differ on this point. Both were unquestionably present throughout the entire martyrdom yet their stories conflict; this is more evidence of the confusing nature of the dark room.

The second attacker is also disputed. “Anonymous” named FitzUrse, while Guernes and Herbert of Bosham named de Tracy. Neither Herbert nor Guernes were at the martyrdom, and no other biographer attributed the second blow to de Tracy. Where, then, did the two authors get their information? It most likely came from the mouths of unnamed monks who, because of the confusing array in the transept, could not see the action unobstructed.

The last two blows are more substantiated. Neither Benedict nor Grim were able to name the third striker (Grim’s inability stemmed from the pain in his wounded arm, no doubt), though fitzStephen and “Anonymous” called him Richard le Bret. Most attributed the fourth blow that scattered the archbishop’s brains across the stones to Hugh of Horsea, though Guernes thought it was de Tracy.¹¹² Surprisingly, despite his proximity to the action, Benedict of Peterborough did not attribute any blow to any particular knight.

It is clear that none of the four primary witnesses to the murder got the sequence of blows completely right. Edward Grim was wounded and became unable to specifically name the attackers, and William of Canterbury ran away after the first blow was struck. Benedict of Peterborough did not offer any names. FitzStephen, who offered two names that disagree with other accounts, was probably hindered by the disorder and limitations of the northwest

¹¹² See Abbott, 139 for analysis into all ten medieval accounts of the sequence of blows.

transept, as were all of the primary witnesses to some degree. None of the biographers enjoyed an unobstructed, peaceful view of the murder. The other biographers such as Herbert of Bosham and Guernes were not at the murder scene, and they therefore were forced to include potentially unsubstantiated information in their *Lives*.

Even so, modern historians have not hesitated to retell the story by specifically attributing each blow to a certain knight. Barlow, Knowles, and Speaight all believed Grim and denoted FitzUrse as the first attacker. Richard Winston named de Tracy as the first attacker. Urry was more cautious and offers de Tracy as a second alternative to FitzUrse. Barlow, however, has argued that Grim was the biographer who got it right.¹¹³ Barlow, Knowles, Urry, and Winston all named de Tracy as the second attacker, even though the only evidence for this are the two questionable *Lives* of Herbert and Guernes.¹¹⁴ Confounding matters is William of Canterbury's account of de Tracy's boasting; it argues that de Tracy struck not the second blow but the first, the one that cut Grim's arm nearly in two. Would de Tracy not have boasted of this second blow if such were the case? Abbott called de Tracy's boast hearsay and deemed it relatively worthless when compared to Grim's first-hand account.¹¹⁵ In this Abbott is mistaken, however, because Grim never identified the second striker. With no solid evidence to the point, it is impossible to tell who struck the second blow. The third and fourth blows have been attributed to Richard le Bret and Hugh of Horsea, respectively, and there has been little debate on these points.

As much as historians would desire it, there is no accurate way to specifically depict the first two sword blows against Thomas Becket. The commotion in the darkened corners

¹¹³ Barlow, *Becket*, 247; Knowles, *Becket*, 147; Speaight, 198; Urry, 131-2; Winston, 365.

¹¹⁴ Barlow, *Becket*, 247; Knowles, *Becket*, 148; Urry, 135; Winston, 365. Though attributing each blow, Knowles admits in a note that "It is impossible to be certain of the number and order of the blows."

¹¹⁵ Abbott, 179.

of Canterbury's northwest transept adversely affected the senses of the onlookers. As a result, the extant primary sources disagree on the agents of action during the final moments of Becket's life. Historians should therefore admit the failings of their evidence and refrain from ascribing particular actions to particular knights. Modern accounts of the murder, in efforts to add detail, imagery, and a degree of accuracy to the story, have only confused the matter as interpretations clash with one another. Accurate readings must accept the fact that confusion abounds and work to illustrate the tale in other ways. Historical narratives of Becket's death can describe the scene with just as much color and suspense without resorting to guesswork and assumption by taking a cue from Herbert of Bosham's *Life*:

So (as we have already said above) extending his neck, exposing his head, like unto one praying, he clasped his hands and bent his knees, while the lectors (I say) on this side, and on that, strike and strike again, strike (I say) and strike again, until they separated the crown of his head from the head.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁶ Abbott, 157.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE PENANCE OF KING HENRY II, 1171-72

Immediately upon hearing the news of Thomas Becket's murder, Henry II was said to have been quite distraught. Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux and confidant of Henry, wrote:

At the first words of the messenger the king burst into loud lamentation and exchanged his royal robes for sackcloth and ashes, acting more like a friend than the sovereign of the deceased. At times he fell into a stupor, after which he would again utter groans and cries louder and more bitter than before. For three whole days he remained shut up in his chamber."¹¹⁷

For while Henry's angry words may have spurred the murderous knights on, it appears that he did not wish for Becket's death and had even sent an envoy to stop the knights before they left the coast of France. Consequently, once the personal ordeal mentioned by Arnulf had ended, Henry offered his complete submission to the Church and whatever it might demand of him as penance: "On this head he submits himself entirely to the judgment of the Church, and will humbly abide by her decision, whatever it may be."¹¹⁸ It seemed apparent that the king was prepared to take full responsibility for his words that may have driven the murderers to their evil deed, words spoken in anger at Becket's rejection of Henry the Younger's coronation.

This chapter investigates whether or not Henry actually meant what he said. In other words, did Henry, fully and to the best of his ability, submit to the power of the Church and its punishments for him? Historians have traditionally answered "yes," defending the king's actions and movements in 1171-72 as politically necessary. It appears, however, that

¹¹⁷ *EHD*, 770.

¹¹⁸ *EHD*, 770.

Henry's actions during the two-year period were seemingly calculated movements geared towards the avoidance of the Church's discipline. By revisiting twelfth-century documents, the truth of Henry's actions can be somewhat measured through his geographical positioning. Moving around his territories, Henry avoided his penance with a series of stalls and tactics. Examined together, medieval sources suggest that Henry was reluctant in his efforts to rectify the martyrdom, even though he certainly seemed saddened by Becket's death. Moreover, the King's continued front of sincerity and goodwill was possibly nothing more than a fine example of royal politics. Though his post-murder depression was real enough, his ensuing march for Papal forgiveness was transparent and evasive.

Historiography

As previously noted, Becket's death was written about extensively in the twelfth-century, and much evidence regarding the aftermath of the martyrdom was collected at the same time. Three formats catalogue this information, two primary and one tertiary: the biographies of Becket, chronicle entries recorded some time after the archbishop's demise, and the assorted letters and documents of the period.

In the study of King Henry's penance the primary biographies are less fruitful to the narrative. The nine Latin *Lives* and Guerne's metrical *Vie de Saint Thomas* concentrate on Becket's life and death, assorted correspondences, and some of the various miracles reported in and around his shrine in Canterbury. Concerning Henry's activities between 1171 and 1174, however, many have little to say about the political maneuvers surrounding Henry's ecclesiastical punishment because their narratives end shortly after the murder; as an

example, William FitzStephen's *Life* ends in 1171. Some are more useful; Edward Grim's biography, for example, contains an appendix of letters concerning the "Compromise of Avranches," the event in which Henry finally accepted his penance. In his *Quadrilogus*, Roger of Crowland details the Compromise as well.¹¹⁹

Twelfth-century chronicles lend more insight. Following events of the years following Becket's murder, they provide information regarding activities and attitudes in England and on the continent. The chronicles deal with the larger history of England and therefore offer more complete evidence in regards to Henry II. In particular, Roger de Hoveden took great care to record several letters pertinent to Henry's penance.

Tertiary accounts help to bolster the accounts of the chronicles. Episcopal and papal letters written in response to the martyrdom have survived, and these include missives from Pope Alexander III, William, archbishop of Sens, and Arnulf, bishop of Lisieux. Royal envoy reports and some anonymous letters offer more evidence.¹²⁰ In addition, Walter Map commented briefly on Henry's character in his courtly satire, though he did not discuss Henry's penance.¹²¹ These materials are interesting in their differing accounts of the murder's aftermath, and one discovers upon reading them that little agreement has been reached on the subject of the Henry's penance. Barlow observes that Henry seemed to avoid the entire affair but never argues that Henry's actions were deliberate.¹²² Notably, Warren's account holds Henry relatively free of guilty intent, ascribing Henry's avoidance of Papal

¹¹⁹ Duggan, *A Textual History*, 178, 218. The full Compromise appears in translation in *EHD*, 773-4 and Hoveden, 356.

¹²⁰ See *EHD* and Millor for translations of these letters.

¹²¹ See Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium* or *Courtiers' Trifles*, trans. M.R. James, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

¹²² Barlow, *Becket*, 252.

punishment to pressing political activities in England and Ireland.¹²³ Neither Barlow nor Warren, both seminal writers on Becket and Henry II, assign much guilt to the English king during his troubles with the Church. With the propensity of evidence pointing against Henry, however, it is clear that some resolution is needed on the topic.

Anne Duggan has briefly addressed the penance of Henry (1998); this is the most recent analysis of Henry's movements during 1171-72.¹²⁴ Despite summarizing the major events, her article does not examine the motivations behind Henry's avoidance of his penance. Instead, Duggan argues that Henry was defiant to the pope in his claims of innocence, and the absence of justice was due more to the political failures of his envoys than to Henry's own devices. Moreover, she only briefly summarizes the extant tertiary sources of import, in particular, those letters of Arnulf and of Henry's original envoy to Pope Alexander III. In addition, Duggan accepts Warren's defense of Henry's movements and does not attempt to inspect them. Yet the preponderance of evidence suggests that the scheming of Henry was behind the elusion of Pope Alexander III's ecclesiastical justice.

Reactions to Becket's Murder

It should be recognized that two forces were at work during the process of Henry's absolution. First, several external pressures were brought to bear on both the English court and the Papacy. These manifested primarily in letters from prominent bishops and political

¹²³ Warren, 530.

¹²⁴ Anne J. Duggan, "Diplomacy, Status, and Conscience: Henry II's Penance for Becket's Murder," *Forschungen zur Reichs-, Papst- und Landesgeschichte: Peter Herde Zum 65. Geburtstag*, Ed. Karl Borchardt und Enno Bünz (Stuttgart: Anton Hiersemann, 1998), 265-90.

figures to Pope Alexander III, who was living in exile in France at the time. The letters motivated the Papacy to react negatively to Henry's role in Becket's murder, forcing the English king to employ defensive measures. At other times these pressures brought their own kind of punishment upon the king, independent of Alexander's devices; notably, when William, archbishop of Sens, placed Henry's continental lands under interdict in 1171.¹²⁵

The second contributing force was Henry himself: for a year and a half Henry managed to avoid responsibility for Becket's murder. Despite frequent announcements about his role in the events surrounding the martyrdom, he actively sidestepped the Church's efforts to assign him punishment. In a symbiotic chronology, Henry's foes on the outside directly affected the Papacy's actions, and as pressure mounted Henry usually found the means to put off what were perhaps regarded as ecclesiastical nuisances.

From the start, the effects of Becket's murder were commented on in highly charged language. William fitzStephen wrote, "The murder of the archbishop in his own cathedral sent a thrill of Horror throughout Western Christendom",¹²⁶ following the deed, "a terrible storm-cloud overhung the firmament, sudden and swift fell the rain and the thunder rolled round the heavens."¹²⁷ The storm's mention reveals a reactionary view of Becket's passion that seems to have been common. The *Chronicle of Battle Abbey* noted, "The news of such a crime spread swiftly over land and sea, and the cry rose from earth to heaven. Immediately everywhere on earth miracles began, to show the death of the priest was in fact a martyrdom."¹²⁸ Such an event seemed unprecedented; despite his grief, Henry must have known that the ramifications of the murder would be severe. William of Newburgh's

¹²⁵ For an account of William's interdict, see Hoveden, 339-343.

¹²⁶ fitzStephen, 161.

¹²⁷ fitzStephen, 157.

¹²⁸ *The Chronicle of Battle Abbey*, 275.

chronicle stated, "Indeed, the report of such a dreadful outrage, quickly pervading every district of the western world, and sullied the illustrious king of England."¹²⁹ The focus and blame shifted almost immediately from the knights who murdered Becket to Henry, and he became responsible for their actions.¹³⁰ With his words as their prime mover, the knights became the instruments of the king's justice.

Soon thereafter, pressure began to build outside of court. Henry of Blois, bishop of Winchester, blamed the king for Becket's death, and he was not alone.¹³¹ William of Newburgh wrote, "almost all persons then attributed the death of this holy man to the king, and more especially the French nobles, who had been jealous of his good fortune."¹³² In a notable case, King Louis VII of France wrote to Pope Alexander, saying:

Let an unheard-of kind of retribution be invented. Let the sword of St. Peter be unsheathed to avenge the martyr of Canterbury; inasmuch as, for the universal Church does his blood cry aloud, complaining not so much for himself as demanding vengeance for the whole Church.¹³³

The problems for King Henry II were only beginning. He had quickly drawn the ire and vengeance of many a Church official. Several notable figures wrote to Pope Alexander, calling for the revenge of the Lord to be thrown at Henry's court. William of Sens wrote that

¹²⁹ Newburgh, 480.

¹³⁰ The escape of the knights is a curious event, made even more so by their mysterious fates. Their guilt was unquestionable: Barlow notes that Robert de Broc even returned to the scene of the crime the day after Becket's murder and justified his deed (*Becket*, 249). It is possible, however, that they escaped punishment entirely. Roger de Hoveden wrote that, after living for a short time in Knaresborough, Pope Alexander sent them to Jerusalem as a penance. They died at Montenegro soon after. Roger provided an inscription of their tombstone: "Here lie the wretched men who martyred the blessed Thomas, archbishop of Canterbury. It was in the year one thousand one hundred and seventy-one that the primate Thomas died by their swords" (338-9). Roger of Wendover places the knights at Knaresborough for the year of 1171 and fails to mention them again; see *Flowers of History*, Vol. I., trans. J.A. Giles (Reprint, London: Henry G. Bohn, 1968), 19. It is unclear whether or not they actually performed their penance.

¹³¹ Henry of Blois was the brother of Henry II's predecessor, King Stephen.

¹³² Newburgh, 480.

¹³³ Hoveden, 339. Certainly, King Louis had several other motivations behind this move against Henry: their several former quarrels over territories in France, Henry's marriage to Eleanor of Aquitaine, and so on. In 1173, Louis would enjoin Henry's son Henry the Younger in a rebellion against his father.

Henry, “not king of the English, but enemy rather of the English and of the whole body of Christ, has lately committed wickedness against the holy one, the son of your right hand [...] Let the vengeance for the blood of this glorious martyr, which cries aloud from England, enter into your presence.”¹³⁴ In a letter to Pope Alexander, Theobald, count of Blois, exclaimed, “Those dogs of the court, the people of the king’s household and his domestics, showed themselves true servants of the king, and guiltily shed innocent blood.”¹³⁵ These accusations clearly implicated Henry in Becket’s murder. Talk of sanctions abounded, and as emotions ran high, allusions to excommunication surfaced as well. Bartholomew, bishop of Exeter, Roger, bishop of Worcester, and Clarembald, abbot of Faversham, also wrote to Alexander, demanding swift justice:

The Church’s urgent need and the martyr’s worth strenuously demand indeed that both the murderers who spilled his precious blood and those who aided and abetted them should be heavily punished, that their punishment bring terror to others.¹³⁶

Gerald of Wales actually reported in the *Vita Sancti Remigii* that one of the four murderers had confessed that the King had bound them with an oath to murder Becket; it is clear that the king was in a rough situation.¹³⁷

Pope Alexander was quick to respond, and before Easter of 1171 he acted. Roger of Wendover wrote, “[he] excommunicated the wicked murderers of St. Thomas archbishop of Canterbury and martyr, and all who had given their advice, assistance, or consent to the deed,

¹³⁴ Hoveden, 343, 340.

¹³⁵ Hoveden, 342.

¹³⁶ Millor, 795. That Roger of Worcester demanded justice was is not surprising, as he had previously refused to aid in the coronation of Henry the Younger.

¹³⁷ Brynley F. Roberts, *Gerald of Wales* (University of Wales Press, 1982), 77. This account, however, is not corroborated by other twelfth-century documents.

as well as all who should receive them into their territories or maintain them.”¹³⁸ Despite the severe nature of the decree and the references to those giving consent to the murder, Henry was not included as an excommunicate. In a move supported by Alexander, however, Archbishop William of Sens placed an independent interdict on Henry’s continental lands.¹³⁹ The threat of excommunication did not disappear, however, and Alexander seemed on the verge of issuing an independent decree of the sort for the English king.

Diplomatic Defenses and Evasions

Facing these varied attacks by the Church on his person and domain, Henry certainly wished to absolve himself, but his effort as such shifted from admittance and confession to a careful strategy of postponement. In Arnulf’s letter to Pope Alexander, later called an “impassioned defense of Henry,” the king’s unqualified repentance quickly transformed into political positioning: “So then, after taking counsel, he calmed down and acquiesced in the advice [...] [that] he may labour to prove his innocence by lawful and canonical means.”¹⁴⁰ In a subtle but dynamic shift, Henry decided to defend himself rather than humbly submit to the Church. Urry notes, “As he started to recover his nerves he threw off or concealed his grief.”¹⁴¹ Duggan notes that in another letter to Alexander, *Ob reverentiam*, Henry attempted to shift the blame to Becket, who had caused his own downfall through his rejection of the peace made at Fréteval, manifest in his excommunication of bishops Jocelin and Gilbert

¹³⁸ Wendover, 19.

¹³⁹ Safely situated in the lands of Henry’s liege lord, King Louis VII of France, William had little to fear from possible reprisals by the English king.

¹⁴⁰ Poling-Schriber, 108; *EHD*, 770.

¹⁴¹ Urry, 151.

Foliot.¹⁴² Henry's behavior for the following year and a half would soon demonstrate this changed attitude.

In March of 1171, before the pope's sentence of excommunication for the murderers (five months after Becket's death), two envoys from Henry's court went to the Papal court at Tusculanum to obtain the King's absolution. The envoys, John Comyn and Master David, were admitted to a hearing after paying five hundred marks to the bishops in attendance.¹⁴³ Pope Alexander, who had only recently heard the news of Becket's death, refused their entreaty.¹⁴⁴ The envoys' report stated that all negotiations were suspended.¹⁴⁵

Later, a second embassy consisting of several English bishops, abbots, and archdeacons were sent to "defend the king against the charge that he had either ordered or desired the archbishop's death."¹⁴⁶ They did not deny, however, that he had given cause for the murder by uttering words which had afforded the murderers a pretext for slaying the archbishop.¹⁴⁷ When they were finally admitted to a hearing, the rumor that Pope Alexander had already decided to excommunicate Henry that very day was spreading, and the members of the embassy caught wind of it. Clearly, desperate action was needed to save their king. To stave off this sentence, the envoys informed Alexander's cardinals that Henry would swear to the Papal mandate in person:

¹⁴² Duggan, "Diplomacy," 266-268.

¹⁴³ Worth two-thirds of a pound, those five hundred marks constituted a king's ransom.

¹⁴⁴ EHD, 771.

¹⁴⁵ EHD, 771. Urry remarks on the turbulent thoughts of Henry at this point: "When the deputation returned, reporting ill success, Henry, apprehensive of what was to come, even dallied with the idea of going over to the then anti-Pope, Calixtus III. More remarkably still, he toyed with the idea of setting up a third Pope in his own domains, though he was dissuaded from this rash course by King Louis, who brought him back to his senses" (154).

¹⁴⁶ The envoys were the Abbot of Valasse, the Archdeacons of Salisbury and Lisieux, Richard Barre and Henry Pinchun. For a detailed daily account of their movements see R.W. Eyton, *Court, Household and Itinerary of King Henry II* (London: Taylor and Co., 1878), 155-6.

¹⁴⁷ EHD, 771.

Being, consequently, placed in a position of the greatest difficulty, we made the most stringent efforts, both through the cardinals and through those of our companions who had access to him, and through the people of his household, to induce him to pause in this design, or at least defer it until the arrival of your bishops.¹⁴⁸

Alexander agreed, and in his excommunication order he decided to exclude Henry until the king could represent himself. In effect, this bought some time for Henry. Though Henry obviously claimed some responsibility for his angry words at court, his submittal to the Church was still in question. Henry's supporters were not about to give in so easily, and indeed, more time would pass before he was forced to confront the issue himself.

Actually, Henry was in France at the time and close by, yet he refrained from visiting the Papal court personally. He spent the months of March and April in Brittany, where he attacked and burned Chateau Jacquelin. In May, he was in Normandy at Pont Orson for the first two weeks, and then his movements become obscured. He left for England on August 1, landing at Portsmouth on the third.¹⁴⁹ Henry then embarked on his campaign in Ireland, an invasion permitted by the Papal Bull *Laudabiliter*, which had been written by Pope Adrian IV in 1155.¹⁵⁰ The invasion of Ireland was perhaps another evasion by Henry: certainly he had ample time in France to negotiate with the papacy, and an extra half-year in Ireland raises further suspicion about his belief that justice should be swiftly achieved.¹⁵¹

Warren, however, argues against Henry's avoidance of justice. He notes that the king's legates did not leave the papal court until autumn, missing the king who had recently

¹⁴⁸ Hoveden, 349.

¹⁴⁹ Eyton, 156-160.

¹⁵⁰ For the complete Bull see Henderson, 7 or *EHD*, 776-7.

¹⁵¹ Warren argues that Henry had no choice but to go to Ireland: "the marriage of Earl Richard de Clare to the daughter of King Dermot of Leinster in the autumn of 1170, the death of Dermot the following May and the victory of the earl's men over the forces of the high-king at the battle of the Liffey made Henry II's intervention imperative and urgent" (530).

departed, and they did not reach Normandy until December. Warren then notes that Henry raced back to France very quickly after hearing the news from these envoys.¹⁵² This argument comprises a stern contention of Henry's purported evasions.

The surviving evidence does not support Warren's defense. Henry was in France all of March and April of 1171, and he remained on the continent all summer long. The report from Henry's envoys was written in April or May, and the envoys thereafter had at least two more months to contact the king.¹⁵³ Knowing that Henry's first envoys had several hundred marks in their possession, they would likely have had the means by which to contact the king. The envoy letter noted, "The lord pope [had] also written to the king, exhorting him to humility; but they had great difficulty in getting him to do so."¹⁵⁴ Thus, Henry had been contacted in regards to the matter and had already reacted to its contents, and a letter from pope to king would certainly be delivered promptly. More likely, Henry received the envoy's news before he departed for England in August. Barlow notes that he did not wait for the Papal legates arrival, but he surely received some notice from his own men.¹⁵⁵ Thomas Jones notes that an expedition to Ireland was not only a quick escape from papal pressures but also a convenient opportunity to do God's work by settling the chaotic troubles of the Irish church.¹⁵⁶

When he did return to France, it is unlikely that he did so, as Warren argues, with the utmost speed. His itinerary places him on the Irish coast at Wexford on March 26 of 1172, waiting for fairer winds. The sea must have been turbulent indeed, for he waited three weeks

¹⁵² Warren, 530.

¹⁵³ *EHD*, 771-2 dates the envoy letter to April or May.

¹⁵⁴ *EHD*, 772.

¹⁵⁵ Barlow, *Feudal Kingdom*, 252.

¹⁵⁶ Thomas M. Jones, *War of the Generations: The Revolt of 1173-4* (Ann Arbor: University Microfilms International, 1980), 8.

before finally crossing to England on April 17.¹⁵⁷ Urry discusses this briefly, noting, “Happily for King Henry, the winter of 1171/2 was stormy – so stormy in fact that Ireland was cut off from the outside world and little news got through.”¹⁵⁸ The assumption is, of course, that Henry had not received any news before he left France. In any case, Henry’s actual departure from Ireland was in the spring and would have been unaffected by winter storms. Could this have been another stalling tactic? Regardless of motive, Henry did not reach Barfleur in France until May 12, fully a year since the envoy letter was written!¹⁵⁹

King Henry II finally met personally with the papal legates at Savigny in May of 1172. In the process of negotiation with the cardinals Albert and Theodinus Henry continued his policy of evasion. An anonymous account outlined Henry’s reluctance to settle: “After protracted negotiations for peace, due to the king’s utter refusal to pledge himself to accept their mandate, he departed from them.”¹⁶⁰ Barlow notes, “Henry refused the legate’s conditions because they required him to take an oath of submission before he knew what penalties they intended to impose;”¹⁶¹ obviously, Henry’s original unconditional submission indicated by the early letter from Arnulf was rendered meaningless in practice.

Final Submission, Reparations, and Reconciliation

On the following Friday 21 May 1172, the two sides met again at Avranches, where William of Newburgh records Henry, “humbly making his appearance, and firmly protesting

¹⁵⁷ Eyton, 165-6. The situation resembles William of Normandy’s delays in 1066, attributed to unfavorable crossing winds.

¹⁵⁸ Urry, 156.

¹⁵⁹ Eyton, 167.

¹⁶⁰ *EHD*, 773.

¹⁶¹ Barlow, *Becket*, 260.

that what had sullied his fame had taken place without his wish or command.”¹⁶² Though he did not deny that his angry words may have spurred the murderous knights on, he postponed yet again: “because he wished his son to be present, in order that he might also give his assent to what his father should promise, the termination of the affair was postponed until the following Sunday.”¹⁶³ Gerald of Wales referred to Henry’s actions as “much altercation.”¹⁶⁴

King Henry did finally accept his penance at Avranches. An anonymous account held, “he affirmed, he would now submit to everything the legates might order, with all humility and devotion.”¹⁶⁵ This represented an intriguing return to his original reaction, made the day he heard the news, to Becket’s murder. His political moves, as well as those of his envoys, however, managed to keep his penance at bay for over a year and a half. Considering the fact that Becket became a saint only a few months later, it is rather amazing that Henry could avoid Becket’s martyrdom and its political storm for so long.

In any case, the knights who murdered Becket never suffered very much for their deed, and the true victim of the martyrdom’s aftermath was Henry alone. The oaths he made at Avranches were costly, notably his promise to provide both himself and 200 knights for a crusade to Jerusalem.¹⁶⁶ But this end result was inevitable, as even the man whom Walter Map called “a clever deviser of decisions in unusual and dark cases”¹⁶⁷ eventually ran out of time and was forced to comply with Papal wishes. Becket’s murder had abruptly changed

¹⁶² Newburgh, 481.

¹⁶³ *EHD*, 773. The son Henry wanted present was Henry the Younger, crowned king of England in 1170.

¹⁶⁴ Giraldus, 239.

¹⁶⁵ *EHD*, 773.

¹⁶⁶ See Roger de Hoveden’s account of the reconciliation at Avranches in the Appendix. Curiously, neither Henry nor his knights ever embarked on this crusade. For a recent analysis of events at Avranches and its relevant documents, see Anne J. Duggan, “Ne in Dubium: The Official Record of Henry II’s Reconciliation at Avranches, 21 May 1172,” *The English Historical Review*, Vol. 115 (2000): p. 643; also Duggan, “Diplomacy,” 272-8.

¹⁶⁷ Map, 477.

life for Henry II and left for his England a wide range of difficulties that included, as will be discussed in the next chapter, a series of rebellions in 1173-74.

History sometimes remembers King Henry II as a rash leader, susceptible to emotional outbursts and driven at times by his sheer anger. This chapter suggests that Henry, at least in his immediate post-Becket dealings with the papacy, was rather more of a calculating sort, careful in his movements, and a strategic thinker. Unlike his German counterpart Frederick Barbarossa, however, Henry's rashness never compelled him to lead an army to Italy in retaliation or to support the anti-pope Calixtus III. Instead, Henry's reparations signified the relegation of the court to below the decrees of the Pope. Henry's protracted but ultimately failed conflict with the Papacy would affect his own future dealings with the Church as well as his sons; John in particular would eventually grant the fief of England to Innocent III as part of his own voluntary vassalage to that pope. The penance of Henry II in 1171-72 was symptomatic of a relationship between popes and kings that continued well into the thirteenth century throughout western Europe.

CHAPTER FIVE: SCOTLAND'S REBELLION, 1173-74

Though his immediate quarrels with the papacy were eventually resolved, Henry II would soon face additional problems that originated from the crowning of his son Henry. The nervous peace between Henry II and Becket, regained at Fréteval on 22 July 1170, had been destroyed by that coronation.¹⁶⁸ Becket's excommunication of the bishops involved then caused Henry II's deadly outburst in France, which led directly to Becket's murder. Afterwards, Henry's protracted conflict with the papacy over his role in the murder ended in a measure of political failure for the king. In the meantime, Henry the Younger was still a king, and at the ripe age of sixteen in 1173, he possessed some ambitions of his own.

Henry the Younger desired the kingly control over some of his father's lands; he preferred Normandy, Anjou, or England. King Louis VII of France and Count Theobald of Blois, two men opposed to Henry politically, had carefully suggested this demand to the young king and urged him on.¹⁶⁹ In particular, Louis VII had territorial aspirations, for on the continent Henry II held and was ruler of the important provinces of Normandy, Brittany, Anjou, and the Aquitaine, a dowry acquired when Henry married Eleanor of Aquitaine (1122-1204), the former wife of Louis VII, in 1152.¹⁷⁰ Henry II refused to honor his son's wishes of territorial control. Consequently, at a council in Paris in 1173 Louis and his vassals swore an oath of allegiance to Henry the Younger that was reciprocated. Henry the Younger then pledged to Philip, count of Flanders, and Theobald, count of Blois, among

¹⁶⁸ Henry the Younger was the first living son of Henry II but the second born; William, the first-born, had died three years after his birth in 1153.

¹⁶⁹ Hoveden, 367.

¹⁷⁰ In 1152 Henry was not yet king of the English, but Duke of Anjou, and he was thus a vassal of Louis VII. The vassalage remained even after his coronation in England in 1154.

others, monies and castles in England and France in return for their military assistance.¹⁷¹

Henry's brothers Richard (1157-99) and Geoffrey (1158-86) joined him, but his third living brother, the future King John (1165-1216), was only six years old and unable to participate.

After the murder of Becket in 1170 and consequential reparations he was forced to pay to the papacy in 1172, Henry II would next find himself involved in a military conflict in 1173. Rebellions on the continent and incursions from the Scots in the north represented perhaps the final trials Henry II would have to face as a consequence of the archbishop's murder. It is then intention of this chapter to demonstrate that these rebellions, and particularly the Scottish incursions from the north, were a dangerous threat to Henry II's territorial power. Much of the analysis centers again on the position of the Scottish men and the information gained in their physical descriptions. Only after the rebellions were finally squelched would Henry II truly regain a firm grasp on his lands and once again exercise singular power over his subjects.

Narrative of the Rebellion

The rebellions against Henry II comprised an extensive array of actors. Fantosme wrote, "the French, the Flemings, and the men of Capis, the earl of Leicester, and Henry's three sons, are in the field against him."¹⁷² Roger of Howden noted that these forces "arose against the king of England the father, and laid waste his lands on every side with fire, sword,

¹⁷¹ Hoveden, 367. The alliance with Phillip was important, as Flemish mercenaries were to play a large role both on the continent, in rebel activity in southern England, and in the ranks of William's Scottish army.

¹⁷² Fantosme, 11.

and rapine: they also laid siege to his castles, and took them by storm.”¹⁷³ Various desires for wealth and land spurred on these assorted rebels, who were able to count three of Henry’s own sons amongst their numbers.

The rebellions soon escalated. While Henry the Younger busily arrayed the barons of Brittany against his father, Philip, count of Flanders, invaded Normandy with his Flemish army. In response, on 16 August 1173 Henry II crossed the Channel and laid siege to the castle of Dol, where Ralph de Fourgeres, the baron then in control of most of Brittany, surrendered to Henry II after losing 1500 of his men.¹⁷⁴ Sensing the turning tide, word was sent from Henry the Younger via King Louis VII to William, king of the Scots. For in a move that would later cause him much strife, Benedict of Peterborough notes that in 1170 Henry II had caused William to become vassal not to him, but to the young and newly crowned Henry.¹⁷⁵ Subsequently, in a missive Henry the Younger confirmed the gift of Northumbria to William, asking his vassal to assist the conspirators in rebelling against the elder King Henry II, or as Fantosme wrote, “send packing all those who at present hold these lands.”¹⁷⁶ William, not in search of war with England, wrote to Henry II and requested the same lands through a peaceful exchange. Henry II denied this request immediately. As a result, William’s council of barons urged him to accept the terms of Henry the Younger, which he did, and the Scottish rebellion was thus borne.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷³ Hoveden, 368.

¹⁷⁴ Hoveden, 372.

¹⁷⁵ Alan O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers: A.D. 500 to 1286* (London: David Nutt, 1908), 246.

¹⁷⁶ Fantosme, 21.

¹⁷⁷ Scotland’s feudal system arrived later than that of the English, but by the time William was king the position afforded him several vassals. J.F. Verbruggen, *The Art of Warfare in Western Europe During the Middle Ages: From the Eighth Century to 1340*, trans. Sumner Willard, (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1997), 121 notes that these vassals never provided William with a large knightly army.

The events of the Scottish rebellion can be traced chronologically through the histories of William of Newburgh and Roger de Hoveden. Unfortunately, Fantosme mentions few dates and is therefore not much of a guide in the construction of a timeline. Still, the evidence points to a similarly understood course of events. In 1173, sometime after the Nativity of St. John the Baptist (24 June), William invaded the English north. Passing by the castles of Wark and Warkworth for the time being, he laid siege to Carlisle, strategically important due to its location in the northwest Valley of Eden, but was unable to take it.¹⁷⁸ During the siege, he received word of an approaching English host under the command of Richard de Lucy, justiciary of England. Deciding to avoid open battle, William moved the bulk of his army away from Carlisle after leaving a portion there to await his return.¹⁷⁹

The English host, however, never reached the Scottish forces in the north. While William was laying siege to Carlisle in the autumn of 1173, a second series of battles were taking place further south in England. Robert, earl of Leicester, had sailed from Flanders with an army of Flemish mercenaries and joined forces with Earl Hugh Bigod in Suffolk. According to Ralph Niger, the two earls marched on Norwich and assaulted it, killed some of that town's citizens, and collected the spoils.¹⁸⁰ The English host under Richard de Lucy and Humphrey de Bohun, the king's constable, arrived and soon defeated them. For while they were on their way to engage William the Lion in the north, Richard and Humphrey had quickly turned their army around at the news of Robert's arrival in England, a more pressing situation because of Suffolk's proximity to Winchester and London. Ten thousand Flemings

¹⁷⁸ Hoveden, 379. Carlisle guards the easiest route to Scotland in the northwest, a pass which runs north through the lowlands and west to the sea.

¹⁷⁹ Early in the campaign, then, William was choosing his targets and moving his army efficiently.

¹⁸⁰ Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History: A.D. 500 to 1286*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1922), 280.

reportedly died in the ensuing battle at Fornham, and the rebels Robert and Hugh Bigod were both captured.¹⁸¹ At the same time that Richard de Lucy had turned south, King William also acted. Promising the lordship of Lennox in return for his aid, William sent his brother David, earl of Huntingdon, to assist the Flemings at Leicester with a portion of the Scottish army.¹⁸² David conducted a campaign in the Midlands but arrived at Leicester too late, as the town had been burnt to the ground by the time he arrived.¹⁸³

Meanwhile, Benedict of Peterborough records William moving on to successfully capture the smaller and often ungarrisoned castles of Liddel, Harbottle, Warkworth, Appleby, whose defenders surrendered, and Burgh.¹⁸⁴ At Burgh, William laid siege to the castle and destroyed its very walls and tower after a brief engagement.¹⁸⁵ Figure 4 shows these and other castles attacked by William in his rebellion.¹⁸⁶ Next came the castle of Wark, which the Scots were unable to capture in the face of a gallant defense by the castellan Roger Stuteville.¹⁸⁷ In his campaign of sieges, however, William had other strategic targets to choose from. He returned to the important castle of Carlisle in 1174, again laying siege until he agreed to a truce with the castellan Robert de Vaux. In the truce, Robert agreed to give

¹⁸¹ Hoveden, 374-5.

¹⁸² Owen, 49.

¹⁸³ Hoveden, 377. For a biography of David, see K.J. Stringer, *Earl David of Huntingdon, 1152-1219: A Study in Anglo-Scottish History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1985).

¹⁸⁴ Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 247-8.

¹⁸⁵ Mike Salter, *The Castles and Tower Houses of Cumbria* (Malvern: Folly Publications, 1998), 22. Appleby, Harbottle, Liddel, and Warkworth castles were of the motte and bailey design of varying descriptions, with all but Liddel being partially protected by stone curtains; see also R. Allen Brown, *English Castles* (Reprint, London: BT Batsford Ltd., 1976), 195 and Plantagenet Somerset Fry, *Castles of Britain and Ireland: The Ultimate Reference Book – A Region-By-Region Guide to Over 1,350 Castles* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1997), 119-20, 134, 172, 188.

¹⁸⁶ Carlisle is not indicated by an arrow but by an independent black dot south of Hadrian's Wall and to the west.

¹⁸⁷ Owen, 50. See Fantosme, 89-95 for a lengthy description of Roger's activities during the siege.

the castle of Carlisle to William by the feast of Michaelmas (29 September) if Henry had not spelled him with English soldiers by then.¹⁸⁸

While riding out this agreement with Robert, the Scottish army made their way to the castle of Prudhoe and laid siege to it, but as William of Newburgh notes, “after the Scottish

Targeted Castles, 1173-4

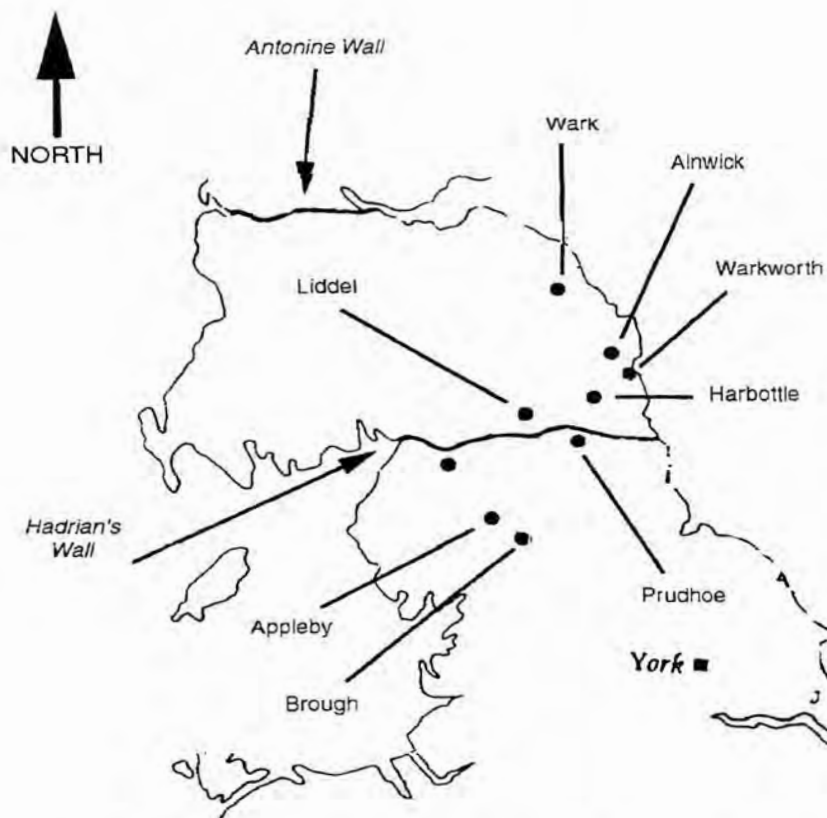


Figure 4: Castles under siege in the Scottish rebellion, 1173-74.

¹⁸⁸ Such a truce was not unusual in Anglo-Norman warfare. For the customs of these “conditional respites,” see Strickland, “Arms and the Men,” 202.

king had toiled at Prudhoe for many days with useless labor [...] on hearing that the military force of the county of York was raised against him, he crossed the Tyne and invaded the county of Northumberland.”¹⁸⁹ Departing thence, William moved to the castle of Alnwick, whose conquest had long been a goal of Scottish kings. He split his men into three divisions and gave control of them to three of his vassals, sending some men to ravage the countryside and keeping others to help him lay siege. William and part of his army remained there until a group of mounted English nobles unexpectedly blundered upon them on the morning of 13 July 1174. William was captured in the ensuing melee, and he soon became a prisoner in Normandy. As such, William consequently agreed to the Treaty of Falaise in December 1174, and the Scottish rebellion was abruptly concluded.¹⁹⁰

Historiography

The Scottish campaign included successful conquests of several of Henry II’s castles. Time and again, however, William chose to avoid open battle with the English feudal host and withdrew north when confronted by it. Historians, therefore, have argued that the Scottish army was not strong enough to confront the feudal host in open battle.

Regrettably, the Scottish army involved in the rebellions of 1173-4 have been consistently miscalculated and underrated by the few historians who have investigated the conflict. Professor John Beeler deemed the Scottish army “motley, ill equipped, poorly led,”

¹⁸⁹ Newburgh, 491. In the Middle Ages, even small garrisons could often hold off large attacking armies; see Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 207.

¹⁹⁰ For the translated text of this treaty, see *EHD*, 413-16. In the treaty, William was compelled to give fealty and homage to Henry II, his new liege lord. Many of his concessions, however, were cancelled in 1189 under Richard I; see R.R. Davies, *Domination and Conquest: The Experience of Scotland and Wales 1100-1300* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1990), 94.

and “ponderous,” and modern historians have largely accepted this perspective.¹⁹¹ Matthew Strickland’s recent study of Anglo-Scottish military strategy refined this view into a three-part critique, citing a lack of suitable equipment, internal hatreds and resentment in the ranks, and a notable lack of cavalry within the Scottish army.¹⁹² Even so, historians have not recently attempted to calculate William’s forces and analyze the potential strengths of his personnel and weaponry. The considerable written evidence from the period is quite descriptive. It demonstrates with some measure of accuracy the size, movements, and capabilities of the Scots. In the process, one discovers that William’s army was not a ponderous collection of malcontents but a mobile army with considerable prowess. The Scots proved to be a competent force with tremendous potential, hampered not by inadequate armaments or insufficient manpower, but by the tactical decisions of William and his military advisors.¹⁹³ The Scottish army in 1173-4 stood in stark contrast to a conventional barbarous hoard, that misnomer typical of medieval English writers and one often accepted by the general public.¹⁹⁴

Though our knowledge of Scotland in the mid to late twelfth century is certainly less complete than that of its neighbor to the south, there are a considerable number of primary accounts that record the activities of William the Lion. The first and most important is the *Chronicle* of Jordan Fantosme, an Anglo-Norman poem that narrates the events of the

¹⁹¹ John Beeler, *Warfare in England: 1066-1189* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1966), 175.

¹⁹² Strickland, “Securing the North,” 222-5.

¹⁹³ The impact of William’s advisors upon his military strategy has recently been discussed in Strickland, “Arms and Men,” 208-15. This chapter will focus on the personnel, equipment, and mobility of the Scottish forces, and not on their strategic decisions.

¹⁹⁴ For the most recent discussion of the negative portrayal of Irish and Scottish barbarians in the period, see John Gillingham, *The English in the Twelfth Century: Imperialism, National Identity and Political Values* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 2000), 41-58.

rebellion.¹⁹⁵ By his own claim, Fantosme was witness to many events in the rebellion and wrote about them with great specificity.¹⁹⁶ In his chronicle Fantosme frequently reiterates his own reliability as a narrator, even quipping, “we who are telling this story have no desire to stray from the truth.”¹⁹⁷ His verses have been dated with some certainty to 1174-5 because Fantosme demonstrated no knowledge of later events caused by the abrupt end of the rebellions in 1174.¹⁹⁸ Because it is one of a limited number of twelfth-century French historical poems, Fantosme’s chronicle has previously been studied more for its literary qualities than for its historical content.¹⁹⁹ Yet in a boon for historians, much of his report can be verified through other contemporary chronicles. Strickland argues that Fantosme’s information is often “more sober and reliable” than the English chroniclers of the period.²⁰⁰ Therefore, we can with some measure of confidence incorporate into modern study the times when Fantosme offered unique information, remembering, however, that the *Chronicle* remains a poem that sometimes compromises accuracy for the sake of meter, or moralizes events for the sake of imagery.

Three other primary twelfth-century documents contain detailed information on the Scottish rebellions. The first of these was by William of Newburgh, a secular canon who, unable because of injury to maintain his holy routine, wrote at the behest of Ernald, abbot of

¹⁹⁵ In English see Johnston, ed.; in Norman French, see R. Howlett, ed., “The Metrical Chronicle of Jordan Fantosme,” *Chronicles and Memorials in the Reigns of Stephen, Henry II and Richard I*, 4 vols. (Rolls Series, 1884-90), 202-377.

¹⁹⁶ For a discussion of eyewitness viability in the Middle Ages, see Verbruggen, 16-18.

¹⁹⁷ Fantosme, 131. Not all medieval chroniclers laid claim to such accuracy; indeed, some men such as William of Malmesbury readily admit their information to be borrowed and possibly flawed.

¹⁹⁸ Fantosme, xxiii.

¹⁹⁹ The other major historical poem (c.1147) in French is Thomas Wright, ed., *The Anglo-Norman Chronicle of Geoffrey Gaimar* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1967).

²⁰⁰ Matthew Strickland, “Arms and Men,” 192. For another recent analysis of Fantosme, see Peter Damian-Grint, *The New Historians of the Twelfth-Century Renaissance: Inventing Vernacular Authority* (Suffolk: Boydell & Brewer, 1999), 74-6.

Rievaulx. His history runs from the Battle of Hastings to 1198, presumably a date close to his death since chroniclers often wrote until they could no longer pen. Compared to other medieval chronicles, William's history is more of a narrative, as he attempts to construct a coherent course of events.²⁰¹ A second writer was Roger de Hoveden (alternatively known as Roger of Howden), a royal clerk in the employ of Henry II's court. His *Annals* document events from 732 until 1201; his earlier material may have been borrowed from Simeon of Durham, among others.²⁰² Gillingham notes, "for the students of later twelfth-century Ireland and Scotland, there is no English historian more important than Roger of Howden, and this is probably because he often traveled abroad and made contacts in trips funded by the crown."²⁰³ A third writer was Ralph Diceto, dean of St. Paul's and the former archdeacon of Middlesex. Ralph possessed numerous contacts in the both church and court, among them William Longchamp, chancellor and justiciary under King John, and Gilbert Foliot, bishop of London. His *Images of History* runs from 1148 to 1200 and contains material largely independent from other written sources.²⁰⁴

Along with Fantosme and the three above Englishmen, other writers such as Giraldus Cambrensis, Robert of Torigini, Ralph of Coggeshall, Roger of Wendover, and Benedict of Peterborough discuss the period but offer relatively little insight into the Scottish rebellions

²⁰¹ Some medieval records like the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* deal with years individually, recording events within each separate year and not stressing continuity throughout them.

²⁰² Hoveden, v. For his possible source, see Symeon of Durham, *Libellus de Exordio Atque Procursu Istius, Hoc est Dvnhelmensis Ecclesie: Tract on the Origins and Progress of this the Church of Durham*, ed. and trans. David Rollason (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000).

²⁰³ For the most recent biographical sketch of Roger, see Gillingham, "The Travels of Roger of Howden and his Views of the Irish, Scots, and Welsh," *The English in the Twelfth Century*, 69-91. See also Frank Barlow, "Roger of Howden," *English Historical Review* 65 (1950): 352-60 and D.M. Stenton, "Roger of Howden and Benedict," *English Historical Review* 68 (1953): 574-82.

²⁰⁴ Grandsen, 231. See also William Stubbs, *Historical Introduction to the Rolls Series*, ed. Arthur Hassall (Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1971) for a thorough set of prefaces to the works of Ralph Diceto, Roger of Howden, and Benedict of Peterborough.

of 1173-4 specifically. When tracts from their accounts are applicable, Alan Anderson's compendium *Scottish Annals* compiles excerpts from their texts chronologically. Anderson has also compiled a collection of Celtic or later documents relating to Scotland, such as the thirteenth-century Scottish chronicles of *Melrose* and *Holyrood*, the Irish *Annals of Ulster*, and Ralph Niger's *Cronicon a Christo Nato*.²⁰⁵

Other collections of tertiary accounts also contain evidence relevant to this study. The most specifically oriented is G.W.S. Barrow's collection of the acts of William the Lion, printed in the volume collection *Regesta Regum Scottorum*.²⁰⁶ Unfortunately, only five hundred of these royal writs have survived to the present day. The acts are taken from dozens of manuscripts and placed into chronological order alongside an itinerary of King William's travels. A second collection is the aforementioned *English Historical Documents*, a sizable volume of English charters, grants, and treaties that concern not only England but also her neighbors in the Isles.

Modern commentaries on the Scottish rebellions of 1173-4 are few and far between; the aforementioned article by Strickland constitutes the most recent military treatment of the event. Thomas Jones's *War of the Generations* surveys the rebellions specifically, but it was written with the general reader in mind. As a result, the book does not analyze the specific military composition of the Scots, and most of the text is dedicated to the continental side of the conflict.²⁰⁷ The rebellions were notable enough to be discussed in the *Cambridge Illustrated Atlas of Warfare*, but its two pages of discussion utter not a single adjective to

²⁰⁵ See Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*.

²⁰⁶ See G.W.S. Barrow, *Regesta Regum Scottorum*, vol. II, *The Acts of William I: King of Scots, 1165-1214* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1971).

²⁰⁷ Jones, ix.

describe King William's army, motley or otherwise.²⁰⁸ Beeler's *Warfare in England* contains an older discussion of the rebellions, albeit in a narrative fashion rather than an analytical approach; Norgate's study follows in a similar fashion.²⁰⁹ Two biographies of the kings involved in the conflict offer the best contextual surveys of the period: Owen's *William the Lion* and Warren's *Henry II*. Owen references the rebellions but relies chiefly upon Fantosme for the entirety of his evidence, so the account is somewhat incomplete in its description of the Scottish army. Comparatively, Warren goes into little detail about the composition of William's forces. It seems that few medieval Scottish histories deign to investigate twelfth-century events, with the exception of various analyses of King David's invasion of England in 1138 and the Battle of the Standard. More often than not, the most influential events in Scottish history are taken to begin in the reign of the English king Edward I (1272-1307), a period romanticized in the recent cinematic adventure *Braveheart*.²¹⁰ One exception is Barrow's *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History*, which, inopportunately, is more of a social and economic history than a military study.²¹¹

The primary evidence contains much information about the potential of William's collected forces. Therefore, rather than generalize about the competence of the Scots, it is necessary to return to those documents and search for all the relevant pieces of description. Initially, some understanding of the rebellion's background must be achieved, whereupon a timeline of William's sieges will lay bear the speed and location of the invading Scottish army. Thereafter, by examining the evidence anew, a more detailed picture of the army's

²⁰⁸ Nicholas Hooper and Matthew Bennett, *Cambridge Illustrated Atlas: Warfare, The Middle Ages, 768-1487* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1996), 50-52.

²⁰⁹ Norgate, 149-164.

²¹⁰ For a later survey of Scottish military activities in the English north, see Anthony Goodman, "The Defence of Northumberland: A Preliminary Survey," *Armies, Chivalry and Warfare*, 161-172.

²¹¹ See G.W.S. Barrow, *The Anglo-Norman Era in Scottish History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

composition, weaponry, and military capability will be drawn. Fortunately, numerous mentions of the army's size and array are found in the chronicles. Some descriptions of the Scots' weaponry are to be found as well, alongside details of the siege engines hauled along with the army. The mobility of the Scots is also shown by their movements between Northumbria and Scotland, information duly noted by some of the twelfth-century writers. The information shared between the original documents is strikingly similar, but when discrepancies are found they will be rooted out and analyzed.

Analyzing the Scottish Army

The analysis of William's military potential should begin with his generalship, or more specifically, with the tactical movements of his army. The Scots were no undisciplined mass of savages but a mobile force under the efficient control of their king. From the accounts of Roger de Hoveden, Jordan Fantosme, and Benedict of Peterborough, we know that King William split his forces three times during the rebellion.²¹² First, William left a portion of his troops at Carlisle when he departed from his first siege of that city in 1173 so that they might continue the blockade of provisions into the castle.²¹³ William returned to Carlisle again in 1174, but when a truce was called and he moved against the castle of Prudhoe, it is unclear whether or not these troops rejoined his army or yet again remained around Carlisle's walls. Second, the king sent his brother David with his "warlike company" to Leicester, and there is no account of David ever rejoining the Scottish army in

²¹² In particular, we can believe Roger with some surety here: immediately following King William's capture in 1174, he went on a diplomatic mission to William's allies the Galwegians, gaining information for his records; see Gillingham, 76 and Owen, 57-8.

²¹³ Hoveden, 379 and Benedict of Peterborough in Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 249.

the north.²¹⁴ Rather, David surrendered the lands of Huntingdon within two weeks following his brother's capture.²¹⁵ Third, William split the northern Scottish army into three divisions at Alnwick. Roger de Hoveden notes that the king kept one division for himself, gave one division to Duncan, earl of Fife and Gilbert, earl of Angus, and the third to Richard de Morville. Along with the troops came orders "to lay waste the neighbouring provinces in all directions, slaughter the people, and carry off the spoil."²¹⁶ According to Fantosme, some of these men went to ravage the coast while the Galwegians wreaked havoc on the lands surrounding Prudhoe.

It is apparent that William the Lion was able to move his army efficiently in 1173-4, splitting his forces and moving quickly when the situation demanded it. Often, the tactical commitments of the English host both in Leicester and on the continent allowed William considerable freedom of movement during his campaigns.²¹⁷ At Carlisle, for example, William had quickly received word of the approaching English army and was able to retreat swiftly, not back to Scotland, but rather to engage other, more remote castles in the English north. Also helpful was the fact that Henry II was absorbed with other rebellions on the continent and could not concentrate on Scotland personally. At other times the Scots operated under their own tactical designs. In 1174, after three days of a failing siege at Prudhoe, William was able to quickly move his army to another location:

The king had addressed them on Thursday evening and the French and the Flemings agreed to his suggestion. The bugles were sounded on Friday

²¹⁴ Fantosme, 83.

²¹⁵ Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 250. There is some debate over David's surrender; he may have surrendered immediately or escaped from Huntingdon to Scotland for a short time. See Stringer, 27.

²¹⁶ Hoveden, 380.

²¹⁷ Strickland, "Securing the North," 219.

morning; the great army and its complement of doughty barons moved off and without further delay come to Alnwick.²¹⁸

Clearly, William was in full command of his army and was able to move it without delay. At Carlisle, Fantosme's record indicates the Scots were an organized army; split into divisions and acting like a proper host of warriors, "They journeyed on [...] Those with gay banners unfurl them, each company sounds its trumpets; the clamor could be heard in the anxious city."²¹⁹

In the course of the army's travels, the Scots attacked no less than ten northern castles, including two separate sieges on the castle of Carlisle. Several of those sieges were successful, and Professor Beeler admits the significance of the rebellion:

For the royalists, the seriousness of the situation in the north was obvious. The Scots had captured seven castles; two other were under obligation to surrender unless relieved by a specific time; a tenth was besieged; and one of the most powerful of the northern magnates, Bishop Hugh of Durham, was conniving with the enemy.²²⁰

In command of a supposed undisciplined force of Scottish knights, Flemish mercenaries, and northern barbarians, William seemed able to move and modify his army as he saw fit. This is hardly the image of a ponderous and poorly led army that Professor Beeler has advanced.

The composition of this army has been discussed recently by Strickland, who notes that Scottish forces in the twelfth century comprised two basic elements: a native levy and an Anglo-Norman or Frankish element.²²¹ In 1173-4, the composition of William's army

²¹⁸ Fantosme, 127.

²¹⁹ Fantosme, 101.

²²⁰ Beeler, 180. Bishop Hugh, according to Roger of Howden, had given William the Lion "three hundred marks from the lands of the barons of Northumberland, for granting a truce from the feast of Saint Hilary until the end of Easter" (377). This gesture towards the young king is not so surprising, as this was the same Hugh who had assisted in the coronation of Henry the Younger in 1170. For a thorough treatment of the bishop and his role in the rebellions, see G.V. Scammell, *Hugh de Puiset, Bishop of Durham* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1956).

²²¹ Strickland, "Securing the North," 222. See also Strickland, *War and Chivalry*, 291-4.

followed this basic order but increased in complexity. There were, of course, the large numbers of indigenous and un-landed Scottish natives gathered by William and other Scottish lords. The hierarchy of landed men was led by the Scottish nobility who were generally “French” or Anglo-Normans, and then southern Scottish troops under the direction of their feudal lords. Some Welsh and men from different Celtic regions, along with the un-landed natives, rounded out the ranks.²²² When first assembled in 1173 at Caddonlee, William’s vassals brought a large collection of these warriors with them:

From Ross and from Moray a great army has been summoned. Of a truth Earl Colban [of Buchan] did not fail to appear. Thither, my lords, came the earl of Angus with such a host as I shall tell, more than three thousand Scots had he under his command. There were many unarmoured men; what more can I say? Such an army has not come out of Scotland since the days of Elijah.²²³

Some of these “Scots,” or armored men, were mounted sergeants who held small estates, and probably some infantry archers.²²⁴ Two more lords joined King William in 1174: Roger Mowbray, “bringing him men and all feudal aid,” and Lord Adam de Port, “with a strong contingent of horsemen [...] and Borderers.”²²⁵ In addition, Ralph Diceto wrote that William collected “an endless host of Galwegians [from Galloway]” that were bold and skillful.²²⁶ We also know from Fantosme that William wrote to Henry the Younger in Flanders and requested the aid of those Flemings, along with their fleet, that were under his command.²²⁷ This request was granted, and William of Newburgh places William across the northern

²²² David Nicolle, *Medieval Warfare Source Book Volume I: Warfare in Western Christendom* (London: Arms and Armor Press, 1995), 115. Henry II also employed Welshmen during the rebellions; see Verbruggen, 117.

²²³ Fantosme, 37.

²²⁴ Nicolle, 121.

²²⁵ Fantosme, 101.

²²⁶ Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 247.

²²⁷ Fantosme, 31.

English border in 1174 with mercenary cavalry and infantry from Flanders.²²⁸ Englishmen were also present in the Scottish army because many of them inhabited towns in Scotland. Included among them was the famous English rebel of Herefordshire, Eric the Wild.²²⁹ After William's success at Appleby and Burgh, more Englishmen would join the Scottish ranks as well.²³⁰

Strickland argues that internal hatreds between these assorted groups of warriors often interfered with Scottish operations, hampering their chances of military success. While this may have been true in 1138, when the Galwegians mutinied en route with King David before the Battle of the Standard, such an event did not occur during King William's rebellion.²³¹ Diverse as the Scots were, no dissent in the ranks was noted by any twelfth century source until July 1174, the month William was taken at Alnwick. The native Scots only turned the sword upon each other when they discovered their leader's capture.²³² By his presence alone, in effect, William was able to keep the age-old hatreds contained in the midst of his campaign. The discipline in the ranks suggests that there must have been a strong sense of loyalty to William. The native Scots, and perhaps even the knights, were probably fighting more for their king than for any territorial gains: "those of Scotland were very good warriors; but when they had lost what they prized most, their rightful lord, who was taken away from them [...] it is no wonder if those who were formerly joyful and in good spirits

²²⁸ Newburgh, 490.

²²⁹ C. Warren Hollister, *The Military Organization of Norman England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 249. The composition of these forces is similar to the Scottish army under King David I in 1138: "disorderly masses of Highlanders and Galwegians, but it also included Englishmen, Germans, and Normans"; see Strickland, "Securing the North," 223-4 and Hollister, 229. For Richard of Hexham's primary account of the Battle of the Standard, see *EHD*, 314-21.

²³⁰ Fantosme, 119.

²³¹ Strickland, 223-4.

²³² See Newburgh, 493; Hoveden, 382; and Benedict of Peterborough in Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 257 for the primary accounts of these internal clashes.

are sunk in grief.”²³³ William of Newburgh notes that the Scots turned upon the Englishmen in their army, another hated group of men, only after King William’s capture, “evincing their innate hatred against them.”²³⁴ This further suggests that the Scottish natives were willing to fight with their old foes for a common cause, but only when united under the leadership of King William.

It occurred to a good number of contemporary writers to mention the large size of the Scottish army, each in his own varying terms. Of them, Roger de Hoveden was the most vague, deeming the men under King William’s command a “large force.”²³⁵ The *Chronicle of Melrose* notes that William, “with a mighty army pitched his camp before the castle that is called Wark”; Ralph Niger called the Scottish forces a “strong army.”²³⁶ William of Newburgh describes the Scots in terms moving from general to fantastic, referring to the army first as “an immense force of his [William’s] barbarous and blood-thirsty people,” and later as “an infinite number of barbarians,” and “an infinite multitude.”²³⁷ The terror in William’s words may be due to his location; Newburgh lay in the north and was much closer to the battle than, say, Roger de Hoveden’s home in London. Jordan Fantosme dubbed these hordes the “great army of Scotland,” the tenor of his language more nationalistic than that of the English historians.²³⁸ It is clear that the Scottish forces were large enough to be seen as formidable, regardless of their actual military capability. Even so, the Scots remained barbarians in the eyes of the historians: untrained and cruel, the Scots were viewed not as a proper and trained army, but as a collection of malcontents and savages.

²³³ Fantosme, 137.

²³⁴ Newburgh, 493.

²³⁵ Hoveden, 377.

²³⁶ Anderson, *Early Sources*, 278, 280.

²³⁷ Newburgh, 488, 490-1.

²³⁸ Fantosme, 43.

The exact size of King William's army is hard to measure, as varying numerical figures can be spotted in several twelfth-century sources. The largest figure is from William of Newburgh, who estimated the Scottish army at more than eighty thousand men.²³⁹ Fantosme, while narrating the first siege of Carlisle in 1173, estimated *quarante mile*, "forty thousand, if Fantosme does not lie."²⁴⁰ This figure is somewhat consistent with Fantosme's earlier claim that, in the pre-war negotiations with King Henry II, William's envoys had offered the English considerable military support with which to combat Henry's sons on the continent:

He [William] will render you his service in this critical hour – you will not find him slow in doing so – before a month is up, with a thousand knights in armour, and thirty thousand men – that I know to be their number, who will mightily trouble your enemies.²⁴¹

William clearly had much to gain from such an offer. Had Henry II accepted, William would have gained the whole of Northumbria and Cumbria for Scotland. One could argue that William exaggerated the numbers of his men in order to entice the elder king of England to accept his offer of aid.²⁴² Regardless, William had a knack for raising competent Scottish troops in large numbers: we know that later in his reign in 1211, for example, he raised a royal army of 4000 men, a force lead by several prominent Scottish earls.²⁴³ As Strickland notes, the Scots were frequently able to field large armies against England in the twelfth century.²⁴⁴ So from the different primary accounts we can accept that the Scottish forces

²³⁹ Newburgh, 491.

²⁴⁰ Fantosme, 51.

²⁴¹ Fantosme, 25.

²⁴² See Verbruggen, 6 for a study on the uses of medieval military statistics in the chronicles, as well as an analysis of their accuracy.

²⁴³ Alan Young, "The Earls and Earldom of Buchan in the Thirteenth Century," *Medieval Scotland: Crown, Lordship and Community, Essays presented to G.W.S. Barrow*, ed. Alexander Grant and Keith J. Stringer (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 1993), 175.

²⁴⁴ Strickland, "Securing the North," 208.

were quite large. Richard de Lucy was compelled to march the English host immediately upon hearing of the first siege of Carlisle in 1173, so the Scottish army, however large its size, apparently merited a quick defensive response.

William the Lion presumably raised his troops through the Scottish feudal system in which his vassals the Scottish earls owed him the services of knights in times of war. Little documentation for Scottish fiefs and their feudal responsibilities has survived for the years of William's reign. The acts in Barrow's collection, though numbering over five hundred, probably represent only a small fraction of the total decreed by William.²⁴⁵ These surviving writ-charters, however, demonstrate the king's potential for raising knights in his own country. Barrow suggests that the acts of William support the idea of a common and feudal Scottish army, a force to be led by Scottish earls and to a lesser degree by native thanes.²⁴⁶ A similar system was in place in England by 1166, when Henry II surveyed the obligations of knights in that country, and some historians have argued that the feudal levy was used as early as the eleventh century.²⁴⁷

Between the years of 1165 and 1182, the surviving acts indicate the feudal obligations of over 23 knights, one footman, and one archer with horse.²⁴⁸ This count excludes the missing evidence, of course, but since large towns such as Edinburgh are not represented in the surviving acts, one could argue that William had secured the obligations of many more

²⁴⁵ Barrow, 68-9.

²⁴⁶ Barrow, 56-7. Act 152 supports this claim, as Orm, son of Hugh's fief was held by heritage for *comuni auxilio* or "common army service" (222).

²⁴⁷ Michael Prestwich, *Armies and Warfare in the Middle Ages: The English Experience* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1996), 60.

²⁴⁸ These obligations are found in Barrow's collected acts of William: Acts 43, 85, 125, 135-7, 140, 147, and 171 note obligation for one knight or part thereof; Act 116 for two knights; Act 84 for four knights; Act 80 for ten knights; Act 45 for one archer with horse; and Act 131 for one footman.

knights and men by 1173.²⁴⁹ More evidence lies in William's separation of his forces. After dividing his army three times William still rode with at least sixty knights during the event of his capture.²⁵⁰ That number of knights must have been greater before the king split his forces. In addition, William may have received scutage with which he could pay for Flemish mercenaries.²⁵¹ The strength of the Scottish cavalry, then, may exceed previous understandings.

The Scots' personal weaponry, as Strickland argues, often left much to be desired. William's force, as his messenger had informed Henry II, consisted of "men in armour and men without."²⁵² Ralph Diceto noted that the Galwegians, and perhaps the rest of the unarmored Scottish levy, were equipped with bladed weapons, "arming their left side with knives formidable to any armed men, having a hand most skilful at throwing spears, and at directing them from a distance; raising their long lance as a standard when they advance to battle."²⁵³ Roger de Hoveden records the Galloway men tossing the infants of English villagers "upon the points of lances."²⁵⁴ These lances were likely long spears and not the romanticized weapons of chivalrous knights in joust. The spears and long knives were somewhat crude in design, certainly not the sort of finely forged swords or spears at the side of English knights. Strickland doubts that the Scots were able to form the disciplined ranks of a phalanx but instead used wild charges in attack.²⁵⁵ The levied Scots were thus

²⁴⁹ Barrow, 69.

²⁵⁰ Newburgh, 492 and Hoveden, 380.

²⁵¹ There is little evidence of scutage having been paid to William, but by the late twelfth century the practice had become common in the Isles.

²⁵² Fantosme, 45.

²⁵³ Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, 247.

²⁵⁴ Hoveden, 377.

²⁵⁵ Strickland, "Securing the North," 222.

vulnerable without armor, though their weapons, consisting of everything from rudimentary spears to farm implements, could doubtlessly prove injurious if enough force was exerted.

In contrast, the armored soldiers in the Scottish ranks were equipped much better. At the Battle of the Standard in 1138, King David I had managed to gather 200 knights, and there were some knights in the rebellion of 1173-4 as well.²⁵⁶ Strickland suggests a number around 100, supplemented by stipendiary knights from England and France.²⁵⁷ At his capture at Alnwick in 1174, William rode with a reduced troop of more than sixty knights. William of Newburgh also noted that some of the Flemish mercenaries were cavalry.²⁵⁸ Fantosme mentioned, “so many fine shields and so many Poitevin helmets” in William’s ranks, and remarked at one point, “Now David of Scotland has come into England with hauberks and helmets and finely colored shields.”²⁵⁹ He also remarked, “the army was magnificent: a warlike company of many knights, of Flemings, and of Borderers,” his words effectively separating the armored knights from both the Flemish mercenaries and the native Galwegians.²⁶⁰ The Scots were also equipped with “steel picks” that were used to hack at the stone walls of Carlisle.²⁶¹ The Flemish in particular were surely well-armed: in northern England, “you would have seen them picking up their bucklers and their bossed shields, attacking the spiky palisade, as now you will hear. By a wonderful feat of arms they stormed through to the ditches,” and in Brittany, they were “putting on hauberks and coats of mail, lacing on their new helmets, and taking their Vianese shields by the arm-straps.”²⁶²

²⁵⁶ As noted by John of Worcester, quoted in Strickland, “Securing the North,” 225.

²⁵⁷ Strickland, “Securing the North,” 224.

²⁵⁸ Newburgh, 490.

²⁵⁹ Fantosme, 45, 83.

²⁶⁰ Fantosme, 91.

²⁶¹ Fantosme, 47.

²⁶² Fantosme, 91, 13.

And while there is little mention of siege engines in the English *Pipe Rolls* during the rebellions, the Scots were formidably equipped with such devices.²⁶³ Just what exactly these devices looked like in the middle twelfth century is debatable. William's father King David I had employed "batteries" against the walls of Wark in 1138, and these batteries were in some form used in 1174 as well.²⁶⁴ However, it appears that William had no siege engines at the immediate outset of his campaign in 1173; Fantosme notes, "The king of Scotland sees that he will never complete the capture of Newcastle upon Tyne with no siege engine."²⁶⁵ He seems to have acquired the devices later, for upon his return to Wark in later that year, "he intended to besiege Wark; he will capture the castle with his Flemings and his archers, with his catapults, with his sturdy siege engines, and his slingers and his cross-bowmen."²⁶⁶ The Scots thus employed not only battering rams such as those at the Battle of the Standard, but catapults as well. Apparently, William possessed several of each type of engine.

Jordan Fantosme's chronicle offers lively discussions of King William's use of these engines. The most notable event occurred at Wark, where William ordered a heavy catapult against the castle walls:

Bring up your catapult without delay! If the engineer speaks truly, it will batter down the gate and we shall take the bailey in no time at all. Now, my Lords, hear how the first stone that it ever hurled for them left the catapult: the stone barely tumbled out of the sling and it knocked one of their own knights to the ground. Had it not been for his armour and the shield he was carrying he would never have returned to any of his relatives. He has good cause to hate the engineer who conjured up this thing for them, and so has the king of Scotland, who was the greater loser by it.²⁶⁷

²⁶³ Prestwich, 289.

²⁶⁴ Hexham, "Account of the Battle of the Standard," *EHD*, 317.

²⁶⁵ Fantosme, 45.

²⁶⁶ Fantosme, 89.

²⁶⁷ Fantosme, 94-5.

Jim Bradbury has argued that this machine was an early trebuchet, due to the sling from which the stone fell.²⁶⁸ If so, this was a more modern and probably untested device to the Scots. It is no wonder that William was frustrated in his attempts to take Wark, for if the stone could not crush a Scottish knight it was likely too small to batter down a gate. After the catapult failed, William “ordered up the other engine: he will burn the castle, not being able to think of anything better to do.”²⁶⁹ This second engine was probably a siege tower or sort of belfry to be set against the walls. From there the Scots could fire the bailey or even the gate under the defensive cover it offered. This tactic had already worked once when the Scots had set fire to the tower at the castle of Burgh.²⁷⁰ Upset at his losses, however, William abandoned the siege before this engine completed its task.

Still, the Scots were not equipped uniformly, and they could not match the English host in a pitched battle between armies, even with the aid of their large numbers. The English feudal levy was much larger than that of the Scots. Examining cavalry specifically, it is thought that the Henry II could expect the obligations of some 5000 knights in times of need, though the most ever called for was a third of that total in 1157.²⁷¹ This advantage was illustrated in the surprise raid that captured King William at Alnwick in July 1174, where the English had hastily gathered a force in York and sent it north.²⁷² The 400 horse in that tossed-together expeditionary group easily outnumbered the Scottish knights. As in times

²⁶⁸ Jim Bradbury, *The Medieval Siege* (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer, 1992), 267. The date of the trebuchet's first use is unknown to historians, but William was probably the first to use one in the Isles. See Bradbury 259-270 for a lengthy discussion.

²⁶⁹ Fantosme, 95. William's experience was by no means unique to a besieger in the period. In August 1203 Phillip Augustus of France besieged the island fortress of Chateau Gaillard in Normandy with a trebuchet and other siege engines. These devices could not break through the wall without the assistance of miners and belfry towers; see Phillip Warner, *Sieges of the Middle Ages* (London: G. Bell & Sons, Ltd., 1968), 130-3.

²⁷⁰ Fantosme, 111.

²⁷¹ Prestwich, 63.

²⁷² Beeler, 180.

past, the English army also possessed superior arms and armor.²⁷³ Gillingham reflects that at the Battle of the Standard in 1138, “the Scots lost because although they had an ‘innumerable army’, they had only 200 mailed soldiers.”²⁷⁴ In the rebellions of 1173-4, consequently, the Scots preferred to avoid open battle with the better-equipped English host, seeking instead to siege castles in various strategic locations in the north.²⁷⁵ Strickland is probably correct in his argument that Scotland also lacked the necessary cavalry with which to combat the English host, though as we have seen, the total count of Scottish horse may have been higher than previously thought.

William's Capture and the Rebellion's End

It is true that the Scottish army under William the Lion did not achieve much during his rebellion. They were unable to capture the key castles of Carlisle, Wark, Prudhoe, and Alnwick in the north. They never engaged the English in a proper battle between armies. The only melee combat between English and Scottish knights came at Alnwick in the surprise capture of William, itself effectively the end of the rebellion. Unfortunately for the conspirators, William's allies Henry the Younger, Phillip of Flanders, and King Louis VII of France were too far away to have saved him. His brother David was still roaming around the

²⁷³ In 1181 Henry II set out specific standards of armament for the holders of knight's fees in the *Assize of Arms*; see *EHD*, 416-7 or Hoveden, vol. II, 9-11. The *Assize* states, “Let every holder of a knight's fee have a hauberk, a helmet, a shield and a lance [...] Also, let every free layman, who holds chattels of rent to the value of 16 marks, have a hauberk, a helmet, a shield and a lance. Also, let every free layman who holds chattels or rent worth 10 marks have an aubergel and a headpiece of iron, and a lance. Also, let all burgesses and the whole body of freemen have quilted doublets and a headpiece of iron, and a lance.” While these standards were not yet in place during William's rebellion, the *Assize* indicates a higher expectation of armament among the English freemen than among the Scots.

²⁷⁴ Gillingham, 49.

²⁷⁵ Strickland, “Securing the North,” 210-18 offers the most complete analysis of this strategy. See also Bradbury, 71-73.

English south, and additional support from Flanders did not get to the Isles in time. Hugh, count of Bar, had brought with him forty knights and five hundred Flemish mercenaries from the continent, only to send the mercenaries back home upon hearing of William's capture.²⁷⁶ One can only imagine what might have occurred if those extra Flemish reinforcements had joined with the ranks of the Scots. Without them, King William's rebellion gained little for Scotland, and the Treaty of Falaise guaranteed that he resumed his kingship under the tight control of his new liege lord, King Henry II of England.²⁷⁷

Reflecting back upon the descriptions of other historians, however, some of the charges against the aptitude of the Scottish army in 1173-4 have now been answered. A motley force they may have been, but King William's patchwork army of thousands was able to move efficiently to various strategic targets, the men never stopping to fight amongst themselves or to settle internal squabbles. The Scottish forces were, according to every primary document, vast in size and a worrisome threat to Henry II's northern realm. As the size of the army was notable, so too was its industriousness. When faced with sizable castles to attack, the Scots constructed siege engines, some of them of the newer slinging variety. Though the operation of the said engines was at times laughable, it is clear that William was able to employ a variety of devices against the walls of the northern English castles. The Scots were certainly no match for a strong English army, for they lacked the necessary number of cavalry to stop the English horse. Many of the Scots were also unarmored and

²⁷⁶ Hoveden, 382-3. In the aftermath of William's capture, King Louis VII of France consolidated his forces by marching with Henry the Younger and Phillip of Flanders upon Rouen, and the war continued for three weeks on the continent until Henry II at last triumphed.

²⁷⁷ "William, king of Scots, has become the liegeman of the lord king (Henry) against every man in respect of Scotland and in respect of all his other lands; and he has done fealty to him as to his liege lord, as all the other men of the lord king (Henry) are wont to do. Likewise, he has done homage to Henry the king, son of King Henry, saving only the fealty which he owes to the lord king, his father" (*EHD*, 413).

fought with simple knives or spears. Regardless, they were fierce enough for Fantosme to call them “terrible in war and of the direst courage,” and “the best warriors known to men.”²⁷⁸

Strickland ends his analysis of twelfth-century Scottish armies by noting, “as the strategy adopted by the twelfth-century Anglo-Norman armies to secure the northern border showed, Norman military supremacy over the Scots was no mere literary creation, but a stark reality.”²⁷⁹ This supposed supremacy lay only in the outcome of the rebellion in 1173-4, not in the capabilities of the forces involved. Victories and setbacks aside, it appears that King William’s Scottish army was more competent than scholars have yet recognized. Its ability to engage multiple targets in a short span of time with a motley assortment of warriors and inferior weapons was indicative of William’s leadership abilities. He commanded the loyalty of his men, and as a result William kept his army unified and moving efficiently throughout the rebellion. The Scots were mobile, effectively led, and better equipped than has been thought, perhaps demonstrating that an army’s strengths are not always illuminated by victories and conquests alone.

²⁷⁸ Fantosme, 49, 101.

²⁷⁹ Strickland, “Securing the North,” 229.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Henry's Final Penance

Several twelfth-century documents note the curious, or, depending on point of view, miraculous coincidence on the day of William's capture. For reasons that historians can only guess at, Henry II, in the midst of the rebellions against him, undertook a pilgrimage to the tomb of St. Thomas Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. Walking on bare feet to the steps of the cathedral, Henry proceeded to the crypt. Once there, he prostrated himself and accepted the lashes of the monks there in penance.²⁸⁰ Henry left on Saturday, 13 July 1174, the very same day that William was taken at Alnwick. Writers both medieval and modern have been quick to point out the religious symbolism of these two simultaneous events; God had forgiven Henry for his role in Becket's murder and rewarded the king by delivering the enemies of England into his hands.

The capture of William the Lion marked the beginning of the end for Henry II's foes. The eldest king took the castle of Huntingdon, where Earl David had encamped, by 12 August and the castle of Fremingham, where Earl Hugh Bigod surrendered within a week. Other Scottish lords surrendered their lands and castles to him before the end of August. With matters settled in England, Henry II concentrated his efforts on the continent, where the rebels surrendered and agreed to terms with the eldest king before the end of October.²⁸¹ Henry II had thus overcome what should be remembered as the final direct repercussion of the coronation of his oldest son Henry.

²⁸⁰ Hoveden, 381; Newburgh, 494; Gervase, in *EHD*, 775-6; and Giraldus, 248-9.

²⁸¹ Hoveden, 381-5. See 385 for the reparations of Henry's sons to their father.

Implications of This Study

King Henry II ruled England thirty-five years, and within that span of time he faced a wide assortment of internal and external consternations. He faced rebellious barons in the years following his coronation, waged military campaigns against the Welsh in 1157 and 1165, and in the latter portion of his reign he fell into disputes over the heredity of his sons and the demands of his wife, Eleanor of Aquitaine. Yet it seems that the years of 1170 to 1174 comprised perhaps the most dangerous period of Henry's kingship and included events that have caught the attention of historians rather more frequently than others. Within this short span, he faced the wrath of the Roman papacy for his role in Becket's murder, and dangerous rebellions from the Scots, his sons, and his French overlord.

This preceding study has endeavored to flesh out some of these perilous events. The coronation of Henry the Younger in 1170 initiated a chain of events that haunted the Henry II for many years. The shock of the Becket's martyrdom, coupled with Henry's ensuing submission to the Papacy in the form of political reparations, set the stage for two more years of trouble. Though the English king evaded anathema and was able to resume his kingship with the backing of the Church, the unsettled environment in England and Normandy allowed his foes an opportunity to rebel. In the end, through his own religious penance and the strength of the English host, Henry was able to survive these five years and live on to rule another for fifteen.

In addition, this study has in some measure attempted to revise some older historical notions concerning Becket's murder in 1170, Henry's penance in 1171-72, and the rebellion

of the Scots in 1173-74. The common link between these three inquiries is what the author believes to be a stricter review of extant historical documents. Whereas previous studies have sometimes neglected relevant documents or have overstated the available evidence, thorough analyses of primary documents, as well as such cross-applications of these documents to notions of timeframe and physical or geographical positioning, inevitably lead to a more complete history. At times, the documents reveal additional details, as seen in Henry's verbal turns in the various letters examined in Chapter Four, and in the quest for historical truth, it is vital to mine evidence for any shred of a helpful detail. As seen in Chapter Three, however, a thorough examination does not always lead to further description. Rather, the process sometimes only results in the perfectly reasonable conclusion, "We simply don't know how, when, or where that happened." Historians need to recognize the worth of gray areas such as these, where the evidence simply does not allow fuller descriptions. In the end, both understatements and overstatements of evidence only serve to mar the face of historical study with hasty conclusions or unsubstantiated claims.

APPENDIX: THE COMPROMISE AT AVRANCHES

“The Charter of Absolution of our lord the King:

To Henry, by the grace of God, the illustrious king of the English, Albert titular of Saint Laurentius in Lucinia, and Theodinus, titular of Saint Vitalis, cardinal priests, legates of the Apostolic See, health in Him who giveth health unto kings. That the things which take place may not come to be matter of doubt, both custom suggests and the ordinary requirements of utility demand that the same should be regularly stated at length in writing. For this reason it is that we have thought proper to have committed to writing those injunctions which we have given you, because you entertain a fear that those malefactors who slew Thomas of blessed memory, the late archbishop of Canterbury, proceeded to the commission of that crime in consequence of your agitated state of mind and the perturbation in which they saw you to be. As to which deed, however, you have of your own free-will exculpated yourself in our presence, to the effect that you neither gave command nor wished that he should be put to death; and that, when news reached you of the same, you were greatly concerned thereat.

From the ensuing feast of Pentecost, for the period of one year, you shall give as much money as in the opinion of the brethren of the Temple will suffice to maintain two hundred knights for the defence of the land of Jerusalem during a period of one year. Also, from the Nativity of our Lord next ensuing, for a period of three years, you shall assume the cross, and shall in the ensuing summer in person set out for Jerusalem, unless you shall remain at home

by the permission of our lord the pope, or of his Catholic successors; provided that if, by reason of urgent necessity, you shall set out for Spain to war against the Saracens, so long a period as shall elapse from the time of your setting out you shall be enabled to defer setting out for Jerusalem. You shall not prevent appeals, nor allow them to be prevented; but they shall freely be made to the Roman Pontiff, in causes ecclesiastical, in good faith, and without fraud and evil-intent, in order that causes may be considered by the Roman Pontiff, and be brought to a conclusion by him; yet so, that if any parties shall be suspected by you, they shall give you security that they will not seek the injury of you or of your kingdom. The customs which have been introduced in your time, to the prejudice of the churches of your kingdom, you shall utterly abolish. The possessions of the church of Canterbury, if any have been taken away, you shall restore in full, in the same state in which they were one year before the archbishop departed from England. Moreover, to the clerks and to the laity of either sex, you shall restore your protection and favor and their possessions, who, by reason of the before-named archbishop, have been deprived thereof.

These things, by the authority of our lord the pope, we do, for the remission of your sins, enjoin and command you to observe, without fraud and evil-intent. Wherefore, to the above effect, in the presence of a multitude of persons, you have, as you venerate the Divine Majesty, made oath. Your son, also, has made oath to the same effect, with the exception only of that which in especial related personally to yourself. You have also both made oath that you will not withdraw from our lord the pope, Alexander, and his Catholic successors, so long as they shall repute you, like your predecessors, to be Catholic kings. And further, that

this may be firmly retained in the memory of the Roman Church, you have ordered your seal to be set thereto.”²⁸²

²⁸² Hoveden, p.357-8

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